



3 1761 06145328 8





*Presented to the*  
**LIBRARY of the**  
**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**  
*by*

**CHARITY GRANT**

Pamlin



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



DENIS OLIVER BARNETT

*One hundred and fifty copies only of this book  
have been printed, of which this is No. 33.*









# DENIS OLIVER BARNETT

IN HAPPY MEMORY

τοὺς γὰρ θανόντας οὐχ ὀρῶ λυπουμενους

HIS LETTERS FROM FRANCE AND FLANDERS

OCTOBER 1914—AUGUST 1915

*No weakness, no contempt,  
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.*

PRIVATELY PRINTED  
MCMXV

*Printed by A. H. BULLEN at the Shakespeare Head Press,  
Stratford-upon-Avon.*





*How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,*  
 —Words of immortal grief rise up unbidden—  
*Enow of* such as on whose necks have ridden  
 Worse and more spiritual foes, Fear, grovelling Gain,  
 Sloth, and the siren Senses, that make vain  
 God-given hands and eyes: from whom is hidden  
 The light whereby men live, though not unhidden  
 Inly they be, nor without flash of pain  
 When nobler natures fall. The weak are left,  
 Their fight unfought, their armour insecure,  
 Their foe but gaining on them till the end:  
 And yet 'twas those thou wouldst at need defend,  
 O arm that for our sake wouldst all endure,  
 O strength whereof we are most ill bereft!

O. P.





Οὐκοῦν ὅπου ἂν ξυμπίπτῃ ἐν τε τῇ ψυχῇ καλὰ ἦθη ἐνόντα καὶ ἐν τῷ εἶδει ὁμολογοῦντα ἐκείνοις καὶ ξυμφωνῶντα, τοῦ αὐτοῦ μετέχοντα τύπον, τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη κάλλιστον θέαμα τῷ δυναμένῳ θεᾶσθαι;

—*Plato Rep.* 402 D.

Each reader of these letters and verses will have his own intimate and cherished memories of their writer. For this reason, if for no other, all that will be here attempted is to give a brief record of the main events in his life and of the traits of mind and character which were manifest to all.

Denis Oliver Barnett, or 'Dobbin'—to use the name by which his older friends at least must always think of him—was born on April 30th, 1895. Until the outbreak of war, the course of his life ran in many respects parallel to that of other English boys of his own class and age. With the exception of a year and a term which he spent at Bedales School in 1903-4, he was educated at home for his first twelve years. Most of this period he spent at Isleworth on the outskirts of London, but the years 1904 to 1907 were passed without break in the depths of the country, at the house to which he always hastened to return for holidays, however short, and which to him was his real home—Burnt Hill near Yattendon in Berkshire. In 1907 he returned to London and entered St. Paul's School, of which he became a Junior Scholar in 1908 and a Senior Scholar in 1910. He left school in the summer of 1914 and was about to go to Oxford in the autumn.

This sequence of home and public school, with the University in prospect, is common enough: but what he was and did is rare indeed. To be Captain of the School for two years, to play for three years as wing three-quarter in the first fifteen, to be easily first in the school Sports at putting the weight, to win a Balliol Exhibition at 17½ years

of age and the Balliol Scholarship at 18½—each of these prizes singly is great enough to be the dream of youth: they were all his. And as everyone recognised, they were his by right and beyond question.

Home and school had conspired to bring his natural gifts to a wonderful variety and excellence. From his early years—it might be truly said to have been his possession by double inheritance—he showed that instinctive feeling for beauty in words which lies at the root of scholarship; many of his older friends will recollect with what zest as a small boy he used to hear and repeat poetry. On such a soil a classical education was sure to bear its best fruits. His work in Latin and Greek was marked not only by extraordinary facility but by imaginative power and real sympathy with the genius of language. Latin verse composition has been declared by an eminent scholar to be the supreme test of scholarship: and it may confidently be left to good judges to decide whether the compositions included in this volume will not bear comparison in their spontaneity and beauty with the best work in this kind. They certainly approach the ideal of being themselves Latin poetry and not merely renderings of English poetry into Latin. He had also the accomplishments which sometimes, though by no means invariably, go with classical scholarship. He wrote excellent humorous verse in English, and on occasion was a graceful and witty speaker.

But though Dobbin loved books, he was never 'bookish'. He grew up with the splendid strength and physique which should belong to youth—well over six feet in height, broad in proportion, supple and fleet of foot; competent critics prophesied for him athletic distinction at the University equal to that which he had won at school. He had to the full the taste for sport and outdoor life natural to a healthy young Englishman. At home he learnt early to ride and

swim and became an excellent shot. He enjoyed thoroughly a long tramp with his gun at Burnt Hill, or a day's wild duck shooting in the Essex marshes with his schoolmaster Mr. L. H. S. Mathews, between whom and his pupil existed one of those friendships which are the peculiar privilege of public school life. But he was not a mere sportsman any more than a mere athlete. His days among the lanes and heaths of one of the most beautiful of English counties had given him—though he rarely spoke of it—a passionate love for the country side. His knowledge of woodcraft was extraordinary; birds and animals had few secrets from him. He brought the same quick and accurate observation and the same sympathetic understanding to Nature as to books: and he did not go unrewarded.

What has still to be said about Dobbin lies at the heart of the matter; but it can only be sketched faintly in words. These gifts, so varied, so admirable, were set in a character of singular strength and sweetness. On all who knew him—whether his contemporaries or older friends—he left an ineffaceable impression. His courage, moral and physical, made him a natural leader among boys: he was a real Captain of his school—no easy task in a great day-school. Yet success never spoiled him; he was always modest and unselfish. But no description of qualities can pluck the secret out of the charm exercised by his personality. Perhaps it comes nearest the mark to say that in him the essential spirit of youth was present without alloy in its most delightful forms—in its abounding vitality, its love of fun and adventure, its unconscious directness and sincerity of outlook, its freshness of perception and sympathy.

The call of war came; and, like hundreds of other young Englishmen, he found his University in the camp and on the battle-field. In August, 1914, he enlisted in the Artists' Rifles: by October 27th he was in France. His own



letters best tell the tale of what work he found to his hand and how he bore himself in that new world. It is enough to say here that upon going to the front he soon received a commission. He became second lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion of the Leinster Regiment on January 1st, 1915, and was promoted to be lieutenant on June 10th. All those who knew him as an officer speak with one voice in his praise. 'He was of the sort that don't know fear and would without doubt have greatly distinguished himself, had he been spared; he only wanted the opportunity. He was always wonderfully light-hearted and cheerful, so much so that I really believe he enjoyed warfare thoroughly, and the worse things were, the more cheerful he was. So 'twas no wonder he endeared himself to us all and that we all feel his loss as that of a dear brother and miss him at every turn.'

During his service he twice came home on leave. He looked older and was perhaps a trifle quieter and graver. But when he talked there was the same Dobbin whom his friends knew, the same spirit which shines through these letters, with its quick responsiveness, its unfailing humour, its invincible gaiety and courage. Youth was still his, though youth transfigured by the light of great and soul-stirring experiences.

On the 30th July he went back to Flanders for the last time. The rest is best told in the words of one of his fellow-officers. 'He was bomb officer and was in his element, leading all the bomb counter-attacks successfully and never getting a scratch. He could throw extraordinarily well and he used to frighten the Germans by getting tonite bombs into their trenches 150 yards away. That night (August 15th) Barnett had to start a working party at a place where our trench touched the German trench, with only twenty yards of unoccupied trench in between. He was warned to be careful, as the Germans had a machine gun and several rifles trained

on the spot, but with his usual courage he got up on the parapet and from there directed the working-party. A flare showed him up and he was fired at immediately and one bullet hit him in the body.' The wound was clearly serious and he was carried from the trenches. On his way back, he met the officer who was to relieve him, and insisted on giving him some further directions about the work that he had meant to complete. He spoke a few words to his Colonel and to a brother-officer ; but his mind was already beginning to wander. After leaving the dressing station, he lost consciousness and died early on the morning of August 16th at Poperinghe, where he rests. 'It's a great ending' he wrote of the death of a school-friend in action at the Dardanelles : the words were to come true of himself.

To taste the bitterness of parting, to grieve for the loss of his companionship, to dream with hopeless regret of the honours which with his gifts he would have won and the good which he would have wrought in the world, had he been spared—these are experiences from which no one of those who loved him can escape. But at other moments and in moods more in accord with his own high courage, it must also be theirs to feel that such a youth has something of a perfection not to be measured by years, and to see in its final sacrifice the consummation of that strength and beauty of spirit, which in the splendour of their reality make death itself appear a powerless mockery.

F. H. D.











[*Telegram.*]

Southampton.

26th October, 1914.

Good-bye am on board and just off. Cheer up.

\*

26th Oct.

1.30 p.m.

I'm writing in the train for Southampton. We have marched into Watford this morning. It's a perfect day and everything is perfect. We did the move very well and had no panics. Kit bags go to the base, and we probably shan't see 'em again, but I've got lots of everything. We are bound for Havre.

\*

26th Oct.

6.35 p.m.

Writing from Southampton platform. Off in about half an hour. We've got our emergency ration—bully beef and dog biscuit. Had a triumphal journey here, and no end of fun. People gave us chocolates and tobacco. Everything is top-hole here, so please don't be fed up. I hope they won't make you pay postage!



It takes about twelve hours to Havre, and we are probably going to garrison there for a bit. Any message for the Belgian Government?

\*

28th Oct.  
10.15 a.m.

Here we are in France, I can't tell you where! It's all perfect. We crossed on a cattle-boat and have been living on bully beef and biscuits. We've just piled arms on the wharf, and are going to do fatigues. I'm so happy. Just met a master from School who is interpreting.

\*

Oct. 31st.

Everything first rate. We're still in an excellent barn, and having priceless weather. We're just going to have some pay. Having the time of my life.

\*

A Barn, France.

Oct. 31st.

It's no good my writing a long letter, as I mayn't say where we are or what we are doing. I'm awfully well and happy, and so we all are. We've done some marching and some train travelling in cattle-trucks, which is rather uncomfy. Here we've got lots of straw, and are living like kings. We've seen—no, I must cut it out!

There are aeroplanes about all the time, and there's a R.F.C. ground near.

I'm getting on awfully well in the language. There's a dear old she-farmer here who does lots for us. I've been

washing hankies, and they wanted it! Do send me a letter some time, and if you can some

Safety pins

Needles

Strong cotton boot-laces

Air cushion (small)

Electric torch

2 or 3 candles (hard)

Boxes of *small* matches (3 or 4)

Quinine tablets (I'm not ill!)

There have been new clothes and things served out to people who were threadbare, and we've heard we're going to have sheepskin coats and gloves.

I wish I could tell you about the glorious things here! There are rats in the straw anyway, and I stalked one with a bayonet in the night and only just missed him.

We were delayed in crossing (cut it out).

It's no good; I may as well stop as there's nothing I can say.

Please realise I'm as well and happy as I've ever been.

Forgive me for writing such tosh! Please tell my friends at school and so on such news as I can give. We've just had tooth-powder and shaving soap served out!

\*

Nov. 1st.

Things continue to go awfully well, and we're as fit as anything and having a perfect time. It's got rather colder, but I've got the clothes for any weather. By the way, when we landed there was an old man frightening the birds with his song<sup>1</sup>. I'm writing by a wonderful lantern made of a candle and a bottle. The people here take English money

<sup>1</sup> 'There was an old man of Boulong.'

without turning a hair. We had a fine service this morning and a communion in the open.

\*

Nov. 6th.

I am having a perfect time. We are sleeping in a huge greenhouse, only without the heating apparatus. It is better than the barn, as there is plenty of light, but rather cold. Chocolate would be very welcome, also Oxo tablets, &c. I haven't managed to get a hair-cut for weeks, and I'm getting rather shaggy, but my clothes are doing well. Thank goodness I brought those leather gloves. We can get heaps of baccy here very cheap. Socks and nice food always welcome. I'm very well and very happy, with every prospect of plenty of work, for which I have never been so fit. You might ask anybody you meet to write to me. Any news of the war would be welcome.

\*

Nov. 7th.

We have got a little time to take breath now, though it won't last long. We got hold of a *Times* of a few days ago, but it was our first new news for some time. We've not had the chance to buy things, so I hope you'll send me a parcel some time with chocolate and things. Chocolate is very rare here, but tobacco is always to be had. Thanks awfully for your letters. They come so nice and regularly. One was given me to-day by a chap who got it from a Scotchman in the road. What he was doing with it, nobody knows. Your letter seems to imply you know where I am. You don't. It's a fine place, anyway. I should like some elastic bands and a good deal of oiled silk, if you could manage to send it. I shall have lots of funny things to tell you when I come back.



We've come in for some fruit here, and are having a perfect time. But there's always lots of work to be done. Please send a clean towel if you can. No chance of getting things washed, as things move so quickly (*double entente*).

\*

Nov. 9th.

I've lost the list of questions, but I'll try and answer them. I can't always get fruit, but generally at present. I can't ever get things washed, but can sometimes do them myself. I've had lots of letters from you all *but no parcels*. I would like chocolate or any small things to eat. I'm very well and enjoying life. I should like some p.c.s, and small dark hankies. I'm writing in an estaminet of great merit, with atmosphere free of charge, and other comforts at a reasonable rate. But the most solid is the atmosphere. We've got a lot of regulars with us in our greenhouse, and they make rather a mess, but are awfully nice fellows. It's funny to see them in shops and so on. They get on wonderfully well, and the people really do like them.

I've had a hairy hair-cut (*deux sous*), and feel rather bald, but nice and clean. I should love the *Pauline* and any papers you can send. It is nice getting letters. I'm afraid I haven't found room for any exercise of intellect, so it is gradually fizzling away into thin air. It is impossible to read even if I had time, as candles are rare and rotten. Thank Heaven, we had some Bryant & May's matches with our baccy, as they only sell fireworks here, wet at that.

\*

Nov. 11th.

Your letter of the 6th arrived to-day. It is amazing that you've only heard twice from me. There must be sheaves

of p.c.s somewhere, as I've written nearly every day. I'm looking forward to the parcel. A regular asked in the course of conversation whether I was in the police force in private life! He must have noticed my feet.

Life is all very nice, and not so cold. I've found lots of people I know a bit, and have got to know all sorts of strange beings, especially those in the *Drain*, who are mostly bus-drivers, and nearly all very nice fellows. I've seen a list of Paulines serving, which was sent to an O.P. here. It's a good list. I hope you don't spit blood every time you get one of these silly communications without any news. I can't help it; and I shall have lots to tell you when I come back for Christmas. What price the Emden?

\*

14th Nov.

We are having a priceless time, and I'm as well as anything. I am enjoying the pleasures of slumber as much on hard ground as I ever did on a bed. In fact, it never made any difference to me at all. It will seem funny undressing at night when we get back! Thanks awfully for the *Pauline*. I've never enjoyed one so much in my life.

Don't you think this paper is nice and clean? I'm nearly as clean myself, as I had a wash all over to-day. I've had a hair-cut (*deux sous*) and I shall now offer a smaller target, though I'm not able to disguise myself as a hayrick any more. Those mittens you made me are glorious, and so are the leather gloves. Job's glass is broken, so he is a casualty and has left off going, which is rather sad, but I can get along very well without him.

We've done some stout cooking in a mess tin, though we can't compare with these regulars, who pick up odd bits of wood at odd times, and have a fire going as soon as

they halt, and things cooked in a few minutes. They are wonderful chaps, and really do command respect, even though the papers say so. We've got a batch of papers about a week old, and they don't lie idle long at a time, I assure you. We've only just heard about Tsing-Tao. Stout work.

If you want to know how the troops are fed, order some Crosse & Blackwell's 'M. and V. Ration'. It's Meat and Vegetables in a tin, and simply splendid! Do try some, and let me know if you like it. We only get it occasionally.

I'm getting to know how to live and be comfy in all sorts of funny places; and to know all sorts of tips that make all the difference.

I haven't found Kit's friend yet. We don't have much to do with people in other companies, but I hope to be able to find him. You see, the companies practically only come together when the battalion is doing something, and then there is not time to get to know people.

I wouldn't have missed this time here for ten years of life. And I may tell you that something glorious is quite likely to happen, which will make it better still.

I drink your health in beastly coffee!

How do you like the Service post-card?

Thank you lots of times for the parcel, especially all the things in it. I hadn't had chocolate since the day I landed, as you can't get it here, there is such a run on it.

\*

Nov. 15th.

Everything going very well indeed, especially me! I am writing by the light of one of those splendid candles. Please send me some more soon, as even they must have an end.

A regular said to me, 'Suppose a lot of them in there (our quarters) are gentlemen's sons?' I said I thought so. 'Expect they're all wishing they hadn't joined!' They (regulars) can't see the eternal fun of the thing, though they'll put up with anything with perfect patience. (The mess on the paper is some glorious stew, which has just been disposed of.)

We were paid 10 f. to-day, and I have now some 20 f. in hand, so I've done very well, as I haven't denied myself anything when occasion offered of indulging the genius.

We were served out with tobacco and cigarettes to-day, so we are living like kings. I've made an army blanket instead of my thin one, and am feeling pleased with myself and the world. (Have you seen the fool who writes in the papers about the beastliness of army stew? I'd like to have him here.)

\*

Nov. 16th.

I'm so glad you've got an idea from the paper as to where we are. We are here all right! You say that I'm allowed to give what news I like, barring places. That is not so. The *local staff* don't allow anything of the kind. The W.O. don't put their foot down so severely, but *in this division* 'on' does not think it desirable. I'm very glad that you've got some of my letters at last. Yours turn up like clock-work, and are simply top-hole.

We've got some straw to sleep on, and are absolutely comfy when we are at home, though sometimes it rains and is cold outside. I'm fit and well, enjoying things like blazes.

I heard from Kenneth to-day. He seems to be having a fine time. He says he has developed a word of command which doesn't make the others laugh, as they used to!



The posts move in a mysterious way. To-day I got a letter from you, and one from C., dated the 9th, but sometimes we get them in two or three days. I'm afraid the posts from here are much more unreliable and slower.

We are having a little time to ourselves nowadays, and we can get things in order and wash clothes. I've quite caught up now with sewing, &c., and can slack a bit and write letters!

I hope you're all as happy and well as I am.

\*

Nov. 17th.

Everything still doing very well. I'm very well and happy. What do you think of this?

A regular remarked to me, 'I shouldn't mind a glass of Simmonds' beer now.'

'Do you come from Berkshire?'

'Yes!'

Tableau.

He was in a Scotch Regiment!

A voice in the twilight: 'I've wiped my mess-tin on somebody's pants: I hope he doesn't mind.'

The humorous side of this life is very much in evidence.

A regular guard relieves a Territorial guard, and learns the current price of food. Thus the corporal of the regulars (Irish): 'Noinpence-bloody-ha'penny for a (blanky) breakfast by (blank)?! Oi could feed the whole (blanky) battalion for that!!'

I'm on guard to-day, and we've done some stout cooking. Pork chops, stewed apple, and tea!

Perhaps we shall be allowed to send some news one of these days, but till then I can only tell you incidentals.

What about Princess Mary's fund for Christmas presents for the pore soljers? 'Mine's beer!'

Please tell her I want chocolates, peppermints, and magazines.

\*

Nov. 19th.

I'm writing in the middle of a kind of stockade of letters and parcels received this morning. Those parcels! I haven't been so bucked for years as I was when I opened them, and am still. I am now absolutely flush with everything, and living in the most appalling luxury. We have had papers up to about the 14th, so your dear little summary was out of date, but it was very nice to read it like that. Everyone has been bombarded with mails to-day. Someone has opened the flood-gates somewhere.

We have been able to buy what we wanted lately, or rather what we could get, which is almost the same thing. It is awfully nice to buy meat and stuff and cook hot meals. I'm quite an old soldier now, with a whole chest of drawers in my hat, and a great butcher knife down my puttees! I've learnt how to put my things in my pack and haversack, so as to have room and get comfortable. I am absolutely happy with one blanket even when it's freezing hard, and am sleeping without straw simply because I want to be luxurious at some future date, though I don't notice its absence now. I had a cold bath in the open after breaking the ice, the other morning, and I'm so hard that I was perfectly warm all the time. It was amazing.

Here's a riddle for you:—

There was a soldier:

The posts were not reliable where he was :  
 If there had not been a war, and he had not changed  
 his plans, the *letters* would have gone in a remark-  
 ably similar way.

Where was he? <sup>1</sup>

This is a riddle which I must not solve for you.

We have been cleaning the place up to-day, which is a horrible job, especially as regulars have been here for some time. Puff!

There was a priceless 'drunk' here the other day when I was on guard. He was fighting like a devil, and when we'd got him down and tied him up, I went, with an O.P. in the section, as an armed guard to escort him to his H.Q., where he was duly pigeon-holed. He made the most magnificent remarks en route, and so did the chaps who were carrying him. The British regular really is a priceless man. By the way, the place —— (cut it out).

You might send me a small pair of field-glasses if possible. I think that really is the only thing I want.

I must go now. Everthing glorious.

\*

Nov. 21st.

We've had another march to-day of about 15 miles, on the most awful frozen and glassy roads that I've ever skated over. It was rather tiring, but it was a glorious day, and there was stew when we got in! The march was only half the day's work, as we are doing fairly full time nowadays. I'm as hard as nails, and in the seventh heaven. Someone has just said, 'Oh, was it you that I once met on the steps of the Royal Exchange?' It sounded so funny here.

<sup>1</sup> Bailleul—Balliol.

Nov. 22nd.

Had another four hours marching this afternoon, after the church parade in the morning. The march was lovely. We're having very clear bright days, and black frosts at night. There is a little snow about, and it is always very cold, but gloriously bracing. We had yesterday's paper to-day, but the news was very small.

You might send out my 12-bore, as there are lots of hoodies here that want killing! There is also a German species of dove among the local vermin, but it is generally too high for a shot-gun. We saw one dropped to-day. Please send *chocolate* before anything else. Then peppermints. I shall want some more lined leather gloves soon.

\*

Nov. 23rd.

(Here beginneth a most selfish Epistle of me.)

Got your parcel yesterday. You can't think how those things are appreciated. The ginger biscuits vanish like smoke. The pleasure of getting a post is simply extraordinary, and when there is a parcel I don't know what to do with myself.

Further suggestions are: chocolate biscuits, a bottle of camp coffee, and a tin of 'Ideal' milk; also, if possible, cocoa in a concentrated form, or, if not possible, ordinary cocoa. Otherwise I can't think how you could have chosen a more lovely collection of things.

There was a rumour of our kit-bags being sent out, after being sent home to be 'replenished'. Perhaps you've sent mine off, and I'm sure the replenishment will be the things I want, as you always send them.

The frost has broken and set in again. We did not march to-day. This life is magnificent, but there are things



that one misses, e.g. you. I heard from Kit—a cheery letter about shooting, which is very nice to hear of here (some sentence!).

I'm meeting all sorts of queer cards—mostly first-rate chaps in their way.

\*

Nov. 25th.

Everything still fine. There's heaps of clothing going for people who want it, but I hardly want anything.

The P-Wagger came to see us yesterday. I met him coming off parade, and threw a hairy salute! It's rather a dear.

The company made a dog the other day, but it was claimed almost at once, so we haven't got a mascot.

It's freezing again hard, but we're very comfy and warm. We've had priceless stew for tea.

Things have bitten me, and I'm going to raise Cain for their benefit! I don't know why I told you this, as it is neither interesting nor funny, and most unsuitable for a p.c. You'd better send this to the *Daily Mail*. I'm feeling silly but very happy.

\*

Nov. 27th.

I'm still going very strong. I gather I'm allowed to tell you a few things nowadays, so here you are, for what it's worth.

We saw a magnificent fight between one of our airmen and a Taube, almost over our heads. The Englishman mounted to the other machine's level, and opened fire with a machine-gun. He circled round and round him, firing all the time, while the Taube tried to mount and get away. After a bit the Taube did a volplané, and then pitched

forward, and went down like a plummet. We heard that the machine was hit in the engine, and the pilot was hit too. This is happening very often: the German scouts come regularly, but very few get back. They amuse themselves with having shots at the hospital with bombs. They did some damage there the other day. A 'common object of the countryside' is planes being fired at by shrapnel. The little puffs appear all round them, and they often have to come down, or get brought down, very fast.

We've been having some real fun, but I suppose I mustn't tell you about it. It's most exhilarating.

Sometimes we fire at the Taubes for comic relief, and imagine we hit them every time, even if they are 6000 feet up! When we hear the machine-gun at the aerodrome start pop-pop-pop-pop, we rush out and join in. It's rather a good rag. The German aeroplanes all have their wings set back a bit and they have the black cross and eagle on them. Ours are straight and have union jacks. I don't know if any of this will be censored. I should like to tell you more. This is doing me no end of good, and I'm very happy.

\*

Nov. 28th.

They caught two spies here, signalling to the Germans with a windmill!

At last I'm allowed to say a bit. We've had a little shell fire, but I found it did not worry me. We were digging away, when there was a huge screech, and bang-bang-bang, three shrapnel shells burst about 150 yards away. They kept on for two hours, rushing over and falling beyond us. There was a battery of our guns close by, and the shells were meant for them. The noise shells

make is like a big cart with the brake hard on, and the burst is a huge bang.

The day was misty, or we should have had some for ourselves, as we were half a battalion on top of a hill. Just before we started back, our guns began, just behind us, firing over our heads. That was glorious.

The next day was clear, and the other half battalion was there. They caught it in very truth, but not seriously. The shells, shrapnel and coalboxes, were coming in by the dozen. One officer nearly got sniped. In fact, the other half battalion had all the fun, and only lost two.

Heard about one of our airmen, who went over the German lines with 20 bombs. He met an ammunition train, and was fired at heavily, and pretended to be hit, diving down to 2000 feet. Then he dropped his cargo, and set the whole show on fire (it burnt for three days) and got off safe. It was a good trick for getting within easy shot without being fired on. I believe the chap at Düsseldorf did the same.

Did you hear that our big naval 9'2 knocked out three of the German 16in. 'Jack Johnson' guns in three shots? It was a glorious bit of combination with the airmen. We've got some fine big guns over here now, and we are by way of out-ranging the German batteries. Our aeroplanes signal back to the batteries by wireless, which the Germans aren't up to. I'm awfully well and happy—good food and plenty of sleep.

P.S. Am taking commish. in regulars! WHAT?

\*

Nov. 29th.

We had a church parade in the morning, and a fatigue in the afternoon, stacking bricks, which we had spent an afternoon putting in one place—so we put them back where they came from, in a new formation.

I've just washed *all over* with amazing results, and put on a Government vest instead of one —— [passage deleted by Censor!]

I'm afraid I shall have to leave some things behind when I move off, or I shan't have room. It will be a sad day in that one respect. Probably join my regiment pretty soon. People who are doing the same as me are having some special instruction. There are quite a large number. I'm awfully bucked with life.

It is most amusing to see German inscriptions on doors &c., crossed out, and English ones such as '20 men "C" Co. Artists Rifles' there instead. When we got here first we heard horrible stories of what they had done: and whatever we wanted, it was always, 'Les Allemands ont tout pris.' But stocks of things have been got in now, and we can buy most things we want, though the prices are pretty high.

We haven't had a Taube here for two days, as it has been dull and windy, so it *has* been rather dull. But we may be going to do some trench digging again soon, which is real business, and I love it.

\*

Dec. 2nd.

Everything going well, and we're frightfully busy with field work and lectures. It's top-hole fun, with four hairy captains teaching us things. Just off to a lecture. Comic turn—quick change by Pte. D. O. B.!

\*

Dec. 2nd.

I've been extraordinarily busy lately, from 6.30 to 6.30, and that doesn't leave much time (or light) to write by (or in)! They're taking a good many of our crowd for commish's,



and they've started a short course of training by officers who understand this particular war (which is quite wrong compared with all other wars). We are going round to have practical experience, and see how everything works, and we're also doing things like map-reading as applied to range-finding, &c. It's awfully interesting, and it's going to be even more so. Heard from Kenneth. He seems happy, as he has a platoon of his own to play with.

The jolly old King came to see us to-day. There was some pretty good cheering when he went through the square; and we were glad to see him. We're quite used to having the P-Wagger about. Sir J. F. came and spoke to us officer-boys for a few minutes, so that's the second time that he has chosen *me* to confer special honour on (splash me!).

There was once a Scotch colonel at Wipers  
 Who was worried by numbers of snipers,  
     But they curled up and died  
     When the Scotchmen replied  
 With 'Five bars rapid fire' from the pipers.

Things are rather slack just now.

A whole lot of Germans in English uniforms were shot down for saying they were the 'Coldstream-er Guards'. That 'er' was rather lucky for us.

Am very well and happy. See you again before Christmas.

\*

Dec. 3rd.

I'm going on as usual, and picking up heaps of things. We watched shrapnel and Black Marias bursting to-day about a mile off; and one of our 9.2's replying. It is most exhilarating, especially when the German shells are a long way off! We had a captain in the R.F.C. explaining all

the combinations between aeroplanes and artillery. It is wonderful.

A young chap I know well has just come back from three weeks in the trenches as officer on probation. (He is going to train with us.) He's got some interesting things to tell. He went out as marker to our snipers, and told them where their shots went, with a strong telescope. Most of this business is done at night. (There's a big moon now.) The company was shelled a bit this afternoon, but the German guns couldn't get the range, so they got off all right.

The Germans are giving up the Taube type, and have got a biplane with the top plane longer than the lower one. Now you'll know them! Look out for the black cross and the eagles!

We're probably here for a bit.

\*

Dec. 6th.

We're beginning to do business nowadays, and feel we're some good at last. I'm still enjoying the instruction. We were going out to visit a battery in action, only it was washed out. We are to have some 'practical experience' on Monday or Tuesday. An Oxfordshire corporal has just shown me a letter from his little boy—simply sweet! (I'm writing in an estaminet.)

\*

Dec. 10th.

So sorry I've not written lately, but I've been rather busy. We've had some 'practical experience' at last. We marched off about 12 miles to arrive after dark at ——. *We* were

a party of 14 prospective officers. After reporting at some H.Q.s (which were in the one whole house in a village, and even that was pretty well ventilated), we were divided among the companies of the —s in twos; but I got by myself with a machine-gun officer. Then we went off to the trenches. Of course the whole place for miles round was full of German snipers, and they took some shots at us, without getting nearer than about two feet!

I went off with my officer to the lines. He was an awfully nice thing, and told me everything. We couldn't go up the communicating trench to the firing line, because it was full of water, so we walked up! Brother Bosch was about 100 yards further on. We were fired at a bit, and the officer asked me whether I wanted to go to the fire trench or a dug-out in the reserve trenches where the officers generally are till there is an alarm. Of course I went up, and got in with the machine-gun section. They were a nice lot of chaps, and I got on with them well. Thank goodness, I *can* get on with the British Tommy.

When I got in the trench (which of course I mustn't describe) I took up a position with glasses and rifle. There was nothing much doing, and it was fairly safe to put your head up. Well, to cut it short, I spent the whole night sniping without once sitting down to rest. It was moonlight, and they were putting up barbed wire entanglements. Whenever the moon went behind a cloud they slipped out and got to work, keeping as low as they could. But I picked them out with those glasses, and let them have it, and then some! I had over 30 shots at fair targets, between 100 and 150, but you can't tell whether you hit or not, as they drop down anyhow. I'm certain I got two, as I saw one pulled into the trench, and the other—well, he was done in, but I won't tell you. They showed very well on the skyline, and I was almost as excited as I was over my first rabbit!

When the dawn broke they went to ground (the remainder) and started sapping, so I fired at the spades, as they threw up the earth. I hit one, and sent it flying. I bet it stung his fingers! Then I got a hoodie crow that sat on the barbed wire at about 150, which I thought rather good shooting for me. So much for comic relief! But in daylight it was hardly safe to put your head up, as their snipers are very good.

Soon our artillery began shelling a ridge a mile in front. It was a fine exhibition. Then the German heavy guns began firing at a ridge behind us—Jack Johnsons. They were out to hit an observation tower of ours, but they didn't. The shells made the most awful noise going over, howling and screeching. After a bit, they thought we were getting too uppish, and whiz-bang! a shrapnel burst 20 yards left. We dropped like partridges, and began to dig holes in the side of the trench to get overhead cover (the dug-outs were in the reserves). We hadn't been at it three minutes when three more came, the third bursting on the parapet and covering us with clay. The man next to me got a bullet through his sleeve, and another through his coat, and I had my puttees ripped up. The bits fairly flew round. We had a few more, all of which came inside a bit, but not a man was touched. Then they stopped for lunch, and we ate bully and biscuits hard. We got some more at about three, all just close to us (the machine-gun always draws shrapnel fire) but no one was hit. There were some nearish things, especially when a huge piece came whirring down on the parapet just over my head. By the way, when the shell burst just over me it jarred me somewhat, as I was curled up *very* close to the side!

Our guns then shelled the Germans just ahead of us, bursting their shrapnel in front of us, for the bullets to carry forward. That was fine. There were heaps of shells



going both ways overhead, and they sounded very close. They put some J. Johnsons in the village behind us. The noise and black smoke is amazing, and the hole would hold half Burnt Hill House. Our guns put a few lyddites into the trenches in front, and at the first a large Teutonic leg was seen to fly twenty yards in the air! I'm afraid that's nasty—I'm sorry.

We came home after dark through the sniper zone, and had our march back. It was really hard, as the road had anything from a foot to two feet of mud on it. We got in at about 12.30, pretty tired.

That was the day before yesterday. Yesterday we had lectures all day, and to-day we marched about 15 miles without a halt, just stopping to look at some batteries. I'd had a *petit pain* for breakfast, and we got in at about four. Thank goodness, that doesn't happen often! You may imagine I'm rather tired now. We really are kept at it. I'm perfectly well, and thank my stars I am quite able to stand this, which is something like hard living. I find I'm stronger than most people here.

I *am* having a glorious time, but you can't imagine how old I am now.

\*

Dec. 12th.

'I wish my mother could see me now!' I'm continuing to learn things of all kinds, and enjoy the process like anything. I'm very happy and well, but I don't get much time off nowadays. Taubes have left off coming to see us here, but we've got something better to do than pot at them. We've just had a lecture by an R.F.C. captain on aircraft and what they do. We've already had an artillery lecture, and been up to see our guns. They are pretty much efficient, especially a huge 9.2 howitzer, called 'Mother'.

Dec. 14th.

A most glorious Christmas parcel just arrived, with everything complete, down to a priceless little pudding! But in a p.c. you tell me the Stores are sending such a parcel, and this came from Lazenby; so is there another still to come? If so, what will become of the British army? I've tried most of the things, and so has the Section, and there is no cause for complaint this time! thank you. (Did you say almonds and raisins? Yes? No? I think so!)

We've been going on fast with our training. It is top-hole work, and I enjoy every bit of it. There is certainly no dulness about the part in the trenches, and it's all just as interesting in its way. We've got a splendid man to train us, one Capt. Williams (Dorsets) who was through it all and wounded at Le Cateau.

Did I tell you we went to see the guns? That was a hard day, as we marched about 15 miles without stopping more than a few minutes. We saw the holes that the Black Marias had made the day we were in the trenches; we had seen them bursting from there. They were not far from our guns' positions. You ought to see the earth and stones fly when those chaps burst; they travel dead slow, and make a peculiar swishing noise. I haven't been close to one yet, thank goodness. If you're close, the shock knocks all the wind out of you. (I'm sorry I can't write a coherent style, but I'm rather rusty.)

I'm always getting into talk with regulars, and getting some idea of what they're made of. I've been tremendously impressed with them. I have the very highest respect now for the British soldier as a fighting man and a gentleman. The Englishmen out here are a type quite apart, and such a refreshing type. They always look so nice and firm and reliable, even when they are absolutely done to the world. And you see some degrees of weariness and physical misery

here which don't happen in England. I feel always that our chaps can stick it, and others simply couldn't.

Of course, *we* haven't been up against it yet, but we've been tired too sometimes, and had to put up with a certain amount. I absolutely love it now, as I have all the time. I'm always fit and ready for more than we get. We've just moved our billets from the greenhouse to some old factory, which is not quite so attractive. I've got separated from my section, which is rather a bore, but it won't be for long, as we shall be joining our regiments about Christmas, I expect. I haven't got out of the way of looking out for rat-holes, and considering billets (which we choose in imagination for our platoons that are to be) from the point of view of ferreting! I always look towards my gun when a magpie or crow gets up, or when pigeons go over. I wonder how long I shall go on doing that!

By the way, I noticed the Germans I shot had got black coats on. Well, I hear now from the report of this Army Corps that they've been served out with black water-proofs. Isn't that nice? I couldn't account for it before, and it worried me. Things are moving about here. The trenches I was in are by way of being the worst on our front. They were hardly ideal in a good many respects. We were paid 10 f. yesterday. Cheer up. If you're all as happy as I am, I needn't worry.

\*

Dec. 15th.

There has not been anything very exciting these last two days, except that we got 10 f. more to-day. We're getting our new billets much more comfy, but it is rather a tight fit. We officer-blokes raised some bikes and went out to-day to do outpost work. Of course I got a puncture, and had to

walk back ! I've just had rosbif at an estaminet and une livre de pommes. I'm at peace with the world.

\*

Dec. 16th.

Still going strong. I'm living awfully well now and am very happy. Our work goes on as usual. We've just had a lecture on sanitation by a man with a sense of humour. Some subject ! and he made the most of it.

By the way, please get me an officer's tunic and bags (2nd lieutenant to begin with, please). You'd better send a suit of clothes to one of these high velocity tailors who have things half made, and let him see how near he can come to the general contour. I shall be able to get equipment out here. Perhaps I shall have a grant later on to cover some of it. The Limerick *was* mine, written amid lots of local colour.

\*

Dec. 18th.

Having a great time. We are doing a little more trench-experience, and I'm writing in a sort of dug-out, with shells fairly flying in all directions.

*N.B.—I shan't post this till I'm back again in billets (to-night).*

We marched out last night in rain and wind like ——— France, and got attached to a battalion about three miles behind the lines. Then we had to leave the roads, as brother Bosch has a way of shelling them on spec. just after dark, and did the most appalling cross-country ramble I've ever done. We had to march in single file, each man holding the man in front, it was so dark. We had to cross ditches and every kind of cheval-de-frise, being sniped at all the time.



One chap fell off a footbridge into deep water, and we had to fish him out. The mud is nowhere less than two feet deep in these fields. (Angels and ministers of grace defend us from Black Marias!) There were huge shell pits all over the place, and some dead Frenchmen to fall over. And all the time the Germans kept sending up magnesium flares, which light up the country for hundreds of yards. You have to keep your face covered and stand still, and hope the sniper chooses someone else. But we got to the trenches somehow, though every now and then we lost touch somewhere, and had to halt. And here we are! All the dug-outs were occupied, and I had to spend the night in the open trench, and it poured all the time! But this morning things are glorious. I've found room in a dug-out (they've just begun shelling us again) and am very happy. We're in reserve trenches about 200 yards behind the firing line (Jack Johnson goes by) but we've got our share of everything. They've been dropping Jack Johnsons between us and the front line, which is quite satisfactory. To put your head up in daylight is asking for it, and the overhead cover is not shrapnel-proof. (Jack Johnson.)

There is a sniper in some ruined buildings about 30 yards *behind* us—God knows how he got there—but I don't like him. I'm with two splendid chaps, from the north of England, and they've shown me photographs of their babies and told me all about themselves. (Jack Johnson.) There are heaps of guns firing at the German positions over our heads, and the noise is simply appalling. We have certainly the preponderance in artillery here. Rifle fire and machine-guns are going like mad to our right. There must be an attack on. (Sniper hits parapet.) I've got plenty of food and tobacco (Jack Johnson) and there is nothing more I could wish! I do love a big noise, especially when it's our guns and not theirs. Our guns are firing without

pause, and the shells are howling and shrieking like fog-horns gone mad, only they go down the scale instead of up. A high-velocity light shrapnel shell sounds like an engine whistling, and goes at an enormous pace. (Bang!)

It has stopped raining now, and things have dried a bit, or this would be in much more of a mess. I've seldom been quite so wet as I was last night. I might even say I was uncomfy, as I got cramp in both legs and no room to stick them out (here come the shrapnel again). When a J. Johnson bursts close, it shakes the ground and everything on it. A shell has just chipped the top of a tree close by as clean as a knife. I'm sorry I can't write coherently, but it's rather exciting down here. We are advancing, I'm sure. The man next to me has just said, 'There must be a war on!' I got hold of some buns the other day, and asked a chap if he could eat one. He said, 'I could eat forty blanky buns and the man that made 'em.' (Pop goes the sniper.)

I seem to have much more power of keeping warm than most people, and I need every bit of it. You may have seen pictures of the goatskin coat issued? Most of the troops have got them, but I haven't drawn one yet. I can sleep in the rain with just an overcoat and cardigan besides the usuals, and keep quite warm. It's a priceless gift. The mittens are still going strong; I've got 'em on now. I'm going to wash to-morrow, as we've got the day off! We shall leave the trenches as soon as it is dark, and then for a four-hour march.

If that sniper isn't careful he'll hurt someone. He has shots at the top of the parapet, and knocks earth into the bully beef.

We've had orders to get kits on and stand by. This was what I came out for: it's glorious.

(Next day) Sunday.

Wash out! we didn't advance at all. Our little crowd of four Artists had to get back, so as soon as it was dark we got out and went, giving good practice to about six snipers, who got us on the skyline. We found our way back somehow across country, with those beastly flares lighting up the place. We were very near being sniped heaps of times. I had one between my nose and 'Wilhelm'.<sup>1</sup> We got home very tired about 10 o'clock.

*This morning.*

I had a wash which is without parallel in history, and put on clean undies. I now feel simply topping. Watched a Taube being shelled, but they couldn't hit the thing.

We haven't heard what did happen last night, but there must have been something big.

It's all very nice. I haven't touched any of the medicines I brought, and feel as strong as a horse.

\*

21st Dec.

On my front there is no change. Things are all working very nicely, and I'm very well and full of good things, thanks to *three parcels* received to-day. I've tied the little black pussy on to my rifle very tight, and he'll have an opportunity of doing good work there.

\*

Dec. 23rd.

It must be topping down at Burnt Hill. I wonder if it rains as much there as it does here. It seems to be unable to stop, and everything is feet deep in mud and water.

Notwithstanding the weather (!) I'm going on very well. We've been having some sham attacks and things to

<sup>1</sup> His moustache.

manage for practice, besides\* the old game of drawing up reports on defence of places, with map to show dispositions. That's rather good fun.

We've got some sing-songs and smokers on for Christmas, and have every prospect of a cheery time.

Could you send a thick leather waistcoat with sleeves? Also a khaki necktie!

\*

27th Dec.

Nothing to report. Got a glorious parcel yesterday with, among other ephemeral things, a priceless collapsible cup, which I believe is from A. Loo? Please thank her most awfully. My old mug was lost or made long ago. (It's only cheese on the paper.) Spent yesterday scrubbing floors, and cleaning out a house for billets. Beastly job.

On Christmas day two chaps went over from our trenches to the Germans with seasonable greetings, and then two Germans came to return the call—and refused to go back! They are now in this town, and bound for England. Don't think the Germans are not sporting. They are generally first to start good fellowship between the lines—of course I mean Saxons and Bavarians. Prussians are ill enemies, and treacherous swine at that.

Thank you for the *Pauline*. I s'pose it's holidays now. Hope they don't raid Burnt Hill common before I've shot the pheasants.

\*

Dec. 29.

My address changes on Friday, so please write to me at :

Machine Gun Squad,  
Army & Reserve G.H.Q.,  
British Expeditionary Force.



We move off to a certain town to do the machine-gun touch, and thence join our regiments, fitted out more or less, after about ten days.

We've been carrying on much as usual, and I've been enjoying life as always. By the way, you say I haven't acknowledged your Christmas parcel. That is not true!!<sup>1</sup> It was simply topping, and I take my hat off to it for the *second* time.

\*

### New Year's Eve.

Here begins (a long dull letter) a new year, and a new order of things for me and about 50 Artists. We're off to-morrow for the machine-gun course, and when that's over, we go on straight to our new regiments, without coming back to this jolly old hole again. So we've done with this corps, worse luck. I feel much more sentimental than I did when we left England, as I couldn't get myself properly impressed with things at all then. I've just come back from the last lecture, which was an exhortation from our Panjandrum (a staff major), who bade us be good officers, which we now proceed to be! We push off to-morrow morning in motor-buses for the base where our General Headquarters are. We shall have a chance of getting clean and buying things of general interest, like nail-scissors, and infernal machines of that kind, which we haven't seen since England.

It has been very nice on this picnic, playing at Tommies, but it will be nice to be civilised again. The only thing that has been able to make me homesick has been the comfortable smell of the officers' quarters, whenever I've been in them. You can't think how bored you get with living not in a real house, and eating out of a mess-tin on the floor or an empty box, and sleeping on the ground. Anyway, that is over to

<sup>1</sup> The letter was lost on the way.

a great extent. Officers always seem pretty cushy, whenever I've studied them in their native haunts. Of course the trenches are very much the same for everyone, but that's quite all right, and I love it, even when the parapet falls in and you see a dead German looking at you! (Did I say I loved that? Let me make that an exception. It's beastly.)

I've been spending happy hours searching the town for a man to mend windows in the place where our 'School of Instruction' hangs out. It was most exciting. I caught one wild-eyed ouvrier, but he'd had all his glass requisitioned to mend the windows of the hospital, broken by a bomb. Then I caught another, but he'd run out of putty, and so on—and all in the most idiomatic French, mind you!!

You probably don't know what a village looks like when it has caught it in the neck. It is a wonderful sight. Each house has chosen its own way of sitting down, and the whole place is all huge pits where the big high-explosive contact shells—Black Maria and her relatives—have burst. It's an extraordinary experience marching through a place like this for the first time, at night. Perhaps you don't know the two sorts of shells, which are absolutely different. There's the big brute, full of lyddite or melinite or some high explosive, which bursts when it hits the ground, and makes a big hole, blowing out in every direction, but chiefly upwards; so that if you are lying down you are all right, unless the thing bursts on you. This chap does not have any bullets in him, but he does his business in big jaggy bits, which you hear flying round—bzzzz, and may kill you some hundreds of yards off, if you are exceptionally unlucky, by dropping on your top-crust. He is generally a heavy shell, fired from a howitzer, and goes dead slow. A Black Maria comes trundling along, whistling in a meditative sort of way, and you can hear her at least four seconds before she gets to you.

The other sort is really much more dangerous, as it is full of bullets, and is timed to burst in the air, when the bullets carry on forwards and downwards in a fan shape. He is almost always an express, and comes up not unlike an express train, only faster. The crescendo effect is rather terrifying, but if you are in a trench, and can keep your head down, he can't get at you seriously. The Germans have a little motor battery of 3-inch guns (they gave me my first taste of shrapnel) which is very unpleasant. The shells come in with a mad and ferocious squeal, and burst with a vehemence that is extraordinary for their small size. They have very small bullets in them, and lots of them.

Anyway, we're getting guns up here hard, all sorts. We've one big chap communing with a cross-road ten miles off! There is not much doubt that we're getting superiority in artillery, and the German gunnery is going off, also their ammunition is often badly finished and doesn't burst. I hope you aren't bored with all this rubbish, which you must have heard heaps of times.

And then there's the Censor!

We shall have a top-hole time at this place we're going to, and they'll probably give us a decent billet to prepare us by degrees for our coming translation.

I hope you like the p.c. I sent you. You may gather that the Corps is going to be practically an O.T.C. I think I've done the right thing, and I hope you are with me.

\*

January 3rd, 1915.

Here we are at the town where our General H.Q. are, the place where we stopped a night in a French barrack soon after we arrived.

We are in another barrack now, a perfectly beastly hole—dismal whitewashed buildings, with cobbled courts

between. We have got a big room to sleep *in*, but we've no straw or anything else to sleep *on*, though luckily we've got two blankets each and are quite warm. I don't mind sleeping on boards a bit now, so really I do very well. We get pretty decent food, and—best of all—don't have to clean our dixey's.

Started machine-gun this morning, and spent a hard day at it. I've learnt heaps already about the old sewing-machine, which really is rather complicated, but it is just the sort of thing I like messing about with.

There are lots of our fellows here who came about a fortnight ago to train for posts as sergeant-instructors in maxim work. They have all got their stripes now, and are doing amazingly well in lecturing. They are training men for machine-gun sections. One of our own chaps is taking the squad I'm in, and he really does it awfully well. Some old general in a letter to our colonel said that they, after a fortnight's training, taught better than Hythe instructors! Our old corps really is rather to the front nowadays in supplying men for responsible positions here. We've had brilliant accounts of the men we've sent for commissions—they've done simply wonderfully. One crawled up to the German trenches, when there was snow on the ground, with a sheet over him; and came back with valuable information. We've had letters from their colonels read out in battalion orders, in which they have been mentioned as 'one of the most valuable officers in the battalion', and so on; this after no training at all, as many of our lot went straight from us, before the School of Instruction was started. We've been warned that we may be detailed to Irish regiments.

We have heard that one of our out-going mails came to grief in a train-smash. I don't know what letters of mine may have been in it; but in case it was one I wrote asking for things, perhaps I'd better repeat. I shall want



an officer's cap, haversack, prismatic compass in case, strong glasses in case, and Burberry. Most other things absolutely necessary can be got here, as we are in clover as regards shops, thank goodness. The last town we were in was a howling wilderness, very properly known to the Tommies as 'Bally 'ole', with reference to which the corps was nicknamed by some wag 'Bally 'ole's Bally Own', on account of our sedentary habits! The name seems to have stuck.

We had a priceless send-off from our companies and officers. Huge enthusiasm!

I'm writing in a real café, a thing I haven't been in this time in France, the best we could do being estaminets. The game was to go and buy food of some sort, and take it to an estaminet, and get Madame to cook it. Here you can go into a pub and order stuff and eat it!! I got on very well with two small kids last night, and they brought all their treasures to show me.

By the way, I never told you of our New Year celebrations. We saw 1915 in, and had a snapdragon, which was a huge success, besides eating up everything we had, as we were to move on the morrow. We had quite a good meal between us, thanks to our families, especially you!

We are worked very hard here, but it's not bad fun, and we shall be 'up' again soon, as we say here.

\*

Jan. 3rd.

Things going on very evenly. Did some more machine-gun all to-day, and filled ammunition belts.

Our posts are all messed up, and I've not heard from you since I've been here, but I expect things'll straighten out soon. This really is a most depressing place; thank goodness, we aren't going to stop long. I was going along the road to-day, and I looked into a window, and saw a staff-officer

reclining in a huge armchair with his feet in the fender. It was a most degrading sight, and made me feel ready for my commission!!

By the way, that's all true about the football match with the Germans on Christmas day, and not just newspaper rot. Our chaps went out and exchanged smokes and food and had concerts. The impression was in many cases that the Germans were very callow, very hungry, and generally fed-up. I've not heard of any liberties being taken with Prussian regiments, but very likely they did the same as the rest.

We had a bomb dropped here near the station yesterday, but it did not do any harm.

We feel we really are in France now. At the other place, though we were some miles from the border, everything seemed very Belgian, nearly all notices, names of estaminets and roads being in Flemish. And Flemish was the language of most of the shopkeepers, &c., though they all talked French—but they have an awfully strange pronunciation, and use lots of quite unintelligible words, which sound almost like kitchen-Kaffir. Of course heaps of them were refugees, and I've heard some pretty beastly stories about the Germans.

Talking of atrocities, I'm going to try and get my photograph taken here before I get an officer's uniform, and send it to you, to give you some idea what I look like. I feel absolutely shapeless with strange accretions, but there aren't too many looking-glasses about! My clothes are altogether breaking up.

I don't know if this letter is more boring than most of mine, but I really think it must be. I haven't felt really bored since I came out until I came here. If I was one of these instructors I should die of dry rot in about a week, the atmosphere is so depressing. Gloom sits enthroned over this hole (some phrase!). For general beatitude give me the trenches, every time.

Jan. 4th.

Got first post we've had here, for which thank you very much. I have just bought a new kind of mousetrap for a mascot, a type which I once saw in a shop in Hounslow many years ago. I'm going to try if it will catch Germans. Went to a real tea shop to-day and had tea and cake at a table with china plates and cups! It was simply top-hole, especially when an officer came in who couldn't speak French to any extent, and provided entertainment.

I've managed to get a £1 note changed here, which has been on my hands all the time, and on the strength of it I've got some more soap and a tin plate, besides the tea and the mousetrap.

Perhaps you'd like to know some phrases one uses here: 'coming back' is Mons; 'up' is in the trenches. I can't think of any more nice ones now, but there are of course shoals of standing jokes, like the jest which assigns to the German aeroplane the good office of amusing the A.S.C. men, as it is the only thing they ever get to shoot at, and wouldn't miss a chance of a shot at three miles for anything, poor dears.

We are over a stable, and the horses kick all night, and shake the building; in fact they're doing it now.

There is nothing at all interesting to tell you. I'm sorry I write such boring letters, but I hope to have something to tell you soon.

\*

Jan. 5th.

Thank you awfully for the parcel, especially the shaving-brush and the cake. Things run on as usual in a very dull way. I'm fed to the teeth with maxims and all their works, of which there is a great and varied assortment. I've ordered the things that can be got here for my officer's kit. Heard some guns

at it to-day—s'pose it was an aeroplane. We actually have our food brought to us, and a man to sweep up here! There is quite a decent washing place for a change. Cheero.

\*

Jan. 6th.

No post in to-day, so I expect there are rather a lot of things waiting for me somewhere. I'm settling down to this stuff a bit, but when you've been doing lots of hard marching and other work out of doors, fiddling about with mechanism in a room does not come very congenial. Of course no one is hungry here, so life has lost its greatest joy, which appealed to me more than most people! But luckily we can get decent food in cafés, when we've got the money, which is not often. I'm rather on the rocks, but expect to be paid in a few days.

The air is electric with rumours of our future fate. We shall know our regiments very soon now. I am told one can get a hot bath here, so I'm out for it in grim earnest. The Welshmen's mascot is in the barracks, a fine goat, who keeps things going by butting people. Cheero.

\*

Jan. 7th.

Who said *Dixie*? It has been in the air for some time, but I didn't want to drop you in the ditch, so I kept it in. We go off on the 11th (Monday) at 6 a.m. for ———, where we take ship for ——— I don't know how to spell it, but I'm going! I bet I'm gladder than you!

My tunic and bags and leather waistcoat arrived to-day, and they fit very well. The stuff which we get here is coming on in a few days. Of course I can get glasses and map-case in London!!

By the way, I'm posted to a regiment, and I'm an officer now, but I don't know the regiment, which constitutes rather a comic turn! Don't you think so?



I'm afraid the photograph touch is a wash-out, as Monsieur has run out of—something (!) and can't do it ; so you'll never know what I'm looking like nowadays, which is perhaps just as well.

(Exit villain—10 minutes interval—'chogleets, cigarettes, chogleets !'—re-enter villain.)

Just been and raked in all sorts of funny things from the clothing train. Still more coming on Saturday and Sunday. Everything is panic here, with people trying to get their stuff together. Mine's all right.

There's no news—everything going on as usual, with a change which you may imagine. Fifty of us are going home (from Monday to Friday, report here Friday). Been making out forms of leave. Feel rather ragtimy.

I shall have to do some shopping in town, and I shall want a Turkish bath, to remove the remains of the trench. Perhaps you will come up and meet me. I'll arrive at Victoria some old time. I'll wire as soon as I know, but I may not find out till I get to England. I'm wiring to-morrow morning to tell you this news, so *you don't know yet*—it's no use pretending you do !

I expect it would be nicest to wangle round in town for a day or so, and shop and get clean, and then push off to Burnt Hill, but I really don't care a blow anyway, as long as I can see all you dears. I do want to see you. Pity the School isn't up, as I could see lots of people at once.

Got paid to-day, so I'm doing all right again, though I can't stop it raining ! It has rained every day since we've been here.

We aren't coming back to this town after the leave, but go right off to our units ; so I shall bring all my worldly goods in my valise.

Job is being nettoyé and having a new face (having spoilt his original one with a potsherd) and I go to get him

to-morrow. I'm afraid I shan't have any nice souvenirs (a word one hears a good deal) when I come, as I've thrown away all the shrapnel bullets, shell caps, and cag of that kind that I picked up in my début; but there's always the things in my hair and so on, which have been through a lot with me!

Good-bye, I'm coming very soon when you get this. Hope I shan't be de trop at Burnt Hill, where you've got some Army Corps already.

\*

Jan. 8th.

I'm afraid my letters are very bad, as it is not easy to sit down and get on to a connected theme when you've been on the go all day at the sort of work we've had. The impressions you get are very flashlighty, and it's particularly hard to join things up, though the idea they give you seems connected enough in your own mind.

You can't think how glad I am about my leave. I feel I can start my new career much better straight from home, and not with a retrospect of dirty months without any variation to speak of, except a few violent ones.

When I get home I shall eat eggs chiefly, and then greens. Eggs are the things that I've dreamt about a good deal—scrambled mostly!

It's not any good trying to tell you anything more about things, as I've seen the best I shall have seen when I see you(!). I hope I shall be able to remedy my rotten letters by word of mouth.

\*

[*Telegram.*]

St. Omer,  
January 9th.

Commission second Leinsters arrive London Monday afternoon five days leave writing. Dobbin.









16th Jan. 1915.

Writing from Divisional H.Q. Nearest infantry entrenched position pretty exciting.<sup>1</sup> Going off soon to join regiments, which are scattered about near here. Don't know whether we are resting or what, but shall soon know. Some of our lot have gone to their regts., and we are waiting for car. Journey all right—ship—train—motor-bus.

\*

18th Jan.

Here I am in billets after 24 hours trenches. We are just outside our town in palatial quarters. I can't say in what, as you might tell the German gunners, and we should be shelled. As a matter of fact this place itself hasn't been shelled for 3 weeks. I'd better go on where I left off. We came on from our last stopping place, whither we motor-bused, in a car, and after reporting at Brigade H.Q. we went on to our regiments, which are all round about here. My lot were up, so Clarke and Broad and I went out, under the care of the Q.M. and reported at a poor little house about 1000 yards from the lines, where we found the C.O.

<sup>1</sup> Armentières.

and adjy. Thence we went on to the companies—I've bought A. Coy. No. 4 Platoon. Met the padre—a dear thing. We went on to the fire trenches about 350 yards from brother Bosch. Got an awfully good dug-out, where I met my Captain, who rejoices in the sterling name of Murphy, and a fellow sub., a Canadian and a perfect sportsman. Very much impressed with good organisation and discipline throughout. As there was not much room in the dug-out I went out as soon as it got dark, and spent the night in a so-called building, only held together by the draught, which blew my blanket about. At 4 a.m. I went the round of the Coy. trenches—very hard to find as they are all over the place—but I found them all, and saw that the sentries were awake—nay rather one wanted to shoot *me*, just because I'd lost my way and came up from the German side! But I prevailed on him to *not*. The ground was honeycombed by ditches and old trenches, and it was really a most thrilling promenade, as I did not even dare to blow my nose, for fear of waking the Crown Prince, or someone. By day they sniped a good deal. We were mending our trenches with sandbags, &c., and they amused themselves in the obvious way. We signalled their shots with a long soup-ladle thing, which we use for baling—it's just like the thing they use on the range in England. Then we put a hat on the soup-ladle and they hit that; so we just held the whole business up high, and let them see their bag, and they were so fed up that they ceased fire for a bit. Some Scotchmen on our left began playing bagpipes, and the Germans were so exasperated with this dastardly method of warfare that they turned a maxim on, and the noise ceased; then they stopped firing. The German guns were shelling a village behind us, but they did not give us any. Our guns were going too. We were relieved last night by another regiment and came back here. It is some game being an officer. We had china

plates and so on in the trenches, and top-hole food. This morning I had an inspection of my platoon's billets and rifles, and am very much pleased with them. I've bought a servant of great merit, who cleans my clothes and gets things for me. It's a cushey life nowadays and I love it. Spent the morning filling up 'crime sheets' with all their offences. Here's a letter, as censored: 'Dear Ned, Just a line to say your brother has got 12 months for being drunk. Your loving Tom.'

We're all very Irish here, and I like the men awfully, especially my platoon sergeant. Got three days out of the trenches resting. I wrote a letter in the trenches, but it was so rotten I scrapped it. I could not have got it off before this.

Very well and happy.

\*

19th Jan.

Everything going very nicely. I've been hard at work since we came down, inspecting my bhoys' rifles and seeing that they shaved, &c. I censored the Company's letters this morning, and they amused me a lot. These chaps write very touching letters of varying quality, but all gems of their kind. Some are extraordinarily funny. Apparently about half the regiment is called Paddy, and the other half Micky, and they *all* write to Bridget! They are real performing Irishmen from Tipperary, Cork, and so on. About 95 per cent. are from the Emerald Isle somewhere. They are very good men, and keep their rifles very well, and get themselves and their billets decent very quickly. I've got a first-rate platoon sergeant and section commanders. I had to pay about half the Company to-day, which I found very amusing.

Just heard I've got to take out a digging party to-night at 8, which is a beastly bore, but these things will happen.

There is no real news of any interest. I'm learning all sorts of little odds and ends I have to attend to in billets, and like the whole business immensely. This really is a first-rate regiment that I've bought—so much better than those Territorial corps!

A chap noticing an A.S.C. man in the casualty list suggested that he had been killed by the explosion of a tin of bully beef. I rather liked that.

I've censored such heaps of letters that I can't find it in my heart to write any more. I hate the very sight of my own writing, having signed my name about 500 times since I have been here.

They've got a good way of finishing a letter :—Your loving Micky  
always.

\*

20th Jan.

I had my digging party out last night, and we had to carry all sorts of material for dug-outs up to the line. We have about 4 miles to go, and we only lost our way once, and soon found it again. It was pitch dark. We found the stuff with some R.E. fellows at a place  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile behind the line, and carried it up a long road which has the advantage of German trenches on three sides; so you never know which way the next bullet will come. As it happened, there was not much doing, so we did our work in more or less peace. The stuff had to go off the road some way behind the lines and be taken across country for a few hundred yards, which included two plank bridges of small size, unstable foundation, and slimy surface. Strange to say, not a man fell in,



though they were carrying heavy weights, and clumsy at that. The stuff was to be dumped just behind our fire trenches. Of course the corrugated iron made a good deal of noise, but thank goodness we were not fired on much.

When I was going along the road I heard a horrible crash in front, and a burst of profanity. I found, when I got up, that there had been a break between two gossoons who were carrying a big piece of corrugated iron. 'This fellow was afther callin' me names.' There they were, about 350 yards from the Germans, making a frightful noise, and quite ready for each other's blood! I reproved them gently and passed on half dead with not laughing.

That reminds me of two lads in this regiment who got fed up with each other in the trenches. So in broad daylight they got up on the parapet and fought. After  $\frac{1}{4}$  hour one was knocked out, but all the time the Germans were cheering and firing their rifles in the air to encourage the combatants! Who says the Germans are not sportsmen?

You can gather from these stories what sort of chaps I've got. They will only obey their own officers—they obey me all right so far—but they make magnificent fighters. They are much cheerier than English Tommies, and able to stand anything. The only way is to jump heavily on serious offenders, and condone little things. Of course drunkenness is the main crime, and that I suppose is a national failing, but beyond an occasional 'blind' the men's discipline seems to me extremely fine. My N.C.O.s. are all men of experience and a very useful lot. This morning I did their letters and inspected rifles and equipment, and did lots of business with my platoon. I may tell you that we are getting a very much more comprehensive bunderbust than we've had before in the organisation of snipers, &c.—I suppose it's on the German model.

The more I live in this business the more I am convinced that I've bought the right regiment, company, and platoon. They are all top-hole, and I consider I've been amazingly lucky.

They began shelling about here a bit yesterday, but they soon stopped. Our guns, as soon as the German guns start making themselves unpleasant, at once shell the village where we know they are in billets, without troubling to deal with their guns. Isn't it rather like 'I'll spank your doll'? All these things work out on very human lines. If we turn a maxim on to a German fatigue party, that night they'll keep firing to spoil our night's rest. If they try to pump water into our trenches, we fire rifle grenades where we see their smoke rising. It's all very amusing. If one side does not annoy the other they live side by side in perfect concord without interfering with one another. But sometimes they get exasperated with one another, and then the fur begins to fly.

The billets here are very good. The men are one platoon to a room (about 60 men), and we have rooms to ourselves, with a combined mess for the officers of two companies. It's all very cushey and nice.

Clarke and Broad have got D. and C. companies respectively, so I don't see much of them. They seem to be enjoying life as I am.

We may have to find another digging party to-night, but I hope not. Anyway it's all in the day's work. I hope you don't mind my telling you details about the 'boys in my dormitory.' They seem so interesting to me, that I am afraid I've rather inflicted them on you.

I'm developing the peremptory command, which is quite hard to get when you've dealt with these chaps on equal terms a few weeks ago. I'm afraid censoring these letters will make mine deadly dull.

Jan. 21st.

Still here in our wee billet, which is a big place just out of the town. We did not have a digging job last night, but we shall be going up again for a few days very soon. I'm getting used to the atmosphere, which is really very pleasant, and not unlike that of a country-house party. We live very well and run a piano among other things. There is really no news, except that I love every bit of this. My fellow officers are a ripping lot.

\*

22nd Jan.

We came up from our billets last night and relieved another regiment. I went to instal my platoon and then did the round of all the company trenches, finishing up with a promenade in front of our barbed wire, which I examined and found pretty good—in fact I got caught up in it for some time. However, the hon. gentlemen opposite did not seem to resent my presence there. Then I fell into an old sap on the way back, and crawled out to find my captain looking anxiously over our parapet to see in exactly what numbers I was attacking! So I explained that 've vos de Viltshires', and we were reconciled. I went round to see that our snipers got their places made. In fact I've started a Snipers' Instruction Bureau which shows extraordinary ability! My snipers are sniping hard now, and I think they're rather good.

I did another round at about 5 this morning, and was very sorry I caught out one of my sentries. I am living in an excellent dug-out with the captain, whom I like most awfully. We have been overseeing the repair of the trenches this morning, and I did a little shooting. As Germans were scarce and wild, I put in some good practice at a tin chimney which rises from their trench, and smote it once. The range

was 350. A. Loo's glasses are top-hole. Of course we have to do our shooting through loopholes, which makes it very hard.

There were heaps of German aeroplanes up this morning, which was clear and bright (it froze hard last night). Moreover the Germans shelled a place about 400 yds. to our right with Black Marias, of which only two out of ten burst; they put in about 30 altogether of all kinds. Our guns took it up, and gave them some more. By the way, last night there was a good deal of artillery firing on both sides, mostly long range heavy shells. They keep up a desultory cannonade all the time, but I don't think either side takes it very seriously.

The German snipers are pretty active, but ours are even more so. There are quite a lot of bullets about, and we have to keep down in the trench in the daytime. We keep them much more down than they do us (some sentence!).

I took some photos. this morning of odd things, notably one of two of my tame snipers, which might be rather good. I expect I shall be able to get some pretty decent ones. Things very soon settle into routine in this sort of life, and I shan't be able to make them interesting now that the novelty is gone, as detail is unfortunately barred. By the way, a rat is reported in this trench! Isn't that topping? I'll make his life a burden. There's a poor old out-of-work cat about, and I'll give her a job. Cheero for a bit.

Here we are again. I've been getting ranges for the snipers by shots at chimneys, &c., of old cottages, while a man with glasses registers high or low. One range they had as 550, which I proved to be 100 yards too much. The captain and I were doing this game together—it's a most fascinating business.

It's awful fun directing operations for improving the trenches. I'm getting quite an expert hedger and ditcher.



Our draining has been very successful. To-night we're going to try and irrigate the Germans a bit by removing a dam in a full ditch alongside the road. We've got a magnificent barricade across the road. These trenches need a lot of looking after, as the clay is rotten with frost, but they are amazingly good, owing to the very thorough and systematic work that this regiment has done. We really are a good regiment, though you may not believe it!

The remarks of the men during the shelling are magnificent. When a big chap from our guns goes overhead they shout, 'Good luck to ye, darlin'.' Their opinions expressed on the Jack Johnsons would certainly cause premature bursts if the German ammunition was any use at all.

It is getting very cold, and I expect we have bought another frost for to-night.

I feel I have quite got into things, and I love it all beyond words. I'm perfectly safe down here in the sewers, so please don't worry. I'll try and write again soon, but of course our posts are rather Irish, and I may not get it off.

\*

23rd Jan.

We weren't shelled yesterday at all, but one of our companies came in for a bit, though they got off without a casualty. I didn't go to bed till 2 o'clock as I was rolling round seeing life on the shady side of our front parapet. There is a good road leading towards the Germans, and you can be sure of absolute privacy on it—in fact the traffic is confined to bullets. Of course we can only go out at night, and then all is peace and love, and it is as safe as Mornington Avenue. Went and visited a party from another regiment which was at work behind our lines—was glad my bhoys are a better

lot. When I did go to bed I shouted out in my sleep, 'Stand to,' but fortunately woke in time to countermand the order before all the men turned out. I felt an awful ass. Nothing much happened in the night except frost, which was very hard. These bhoys are as tough as iron and don't feel the cold at all. It has struck me that the reason why territorials can't stand such hardships in the trenches as regulars is that they don't know how to look after themselves, and in fact have far more to undergo for that reason:—they don't know how to make dug-outs and drain water off, &c. This morning just before dawn we manned the parapet and fired two volleys—magnificently together—in case the Germans should be stretching their legs. Let's hope they were. Anyway it seemed to have annoyed the remainder horribly, so that they kept firing long after we had stopped. There were lots of aeroplanes about as soon as it got light, and we shelled each others' vigorously, but apparently without effect. The Germans were firing a very large shell at ours, which gave a thick yellowish smoke, and seemed to combine high explosive and shrapnel. One poor old Taube was so foolish as to come and look at us, so we squirted at her till she picked up her skirts and ran. I believe she was hit—probably by the shot I fired!

I just went out of the dug-out to see what was happening, as I heard an anti-aircraft gun. It is an English plane being shelled, but they're going miles away. On my way back I got showered with earth from a bullet which disembowelled a sandbag up above. Some sniper thinks he has found a loophole, and is firing there steadily. Don't tell him, but *it is not there*; moreover, that is the safest part of the whole trench, as the parapet is seven feet high—but don't tell him!

This morning I took possession of a loophole and turned those wonderful glasses on to their parapet. With great

difficulty I managed to make out a loophole, and then the background of it changed and I could see the field beyond, so I knew a head had been there. After a bit I went back, and the background was as originally. I fired at 450, and the background changed abruptly. That loophole has not been used since all day! I visited another sniper's loophole this afternoon, and got to work with the glasses. For nearly an hour I could not pick out anything in their parapet. Then I got on to a rectangular hole, which I could only just make out. Fortunately there was a post immediately under it, which I could see without glasses. I gave my glasses to the snipist, and put him on observation at a hole near by. My first shot clipped the parapet straight over the hole (500 yards). At my second shot the man's head showed suddenly for a second above the parapet and then disappeared. Rather think I managed to push his face, and through his own keyhole too. The Germans answered my shots from the neighbourhood, but did not know where they came from—some testimony to my Snipers' Advisory Institution!

That is all the news to-day. We were mending the trench most of the time, and it is pretty good now. By the way I've actually seen two rats, and nearly got one of them with a spade. Anyway a German is better! I got *Punch* yesterday, for which many thanks. It has now been bagged by a brother officer.

It's going to freeze to-night. There is a thin layer of ice over the water, and a German bullet makes it jump in a most extraordinary way. They certainly have a cordial way of breaking the ice without standing on ceremony or anything that would bring them against the skyline, worse luck. They hide their snipers very well indeed; there's one with a hole in a wall about 500 yards off, whom I am particularly anxious to mark down. I've got to within about 5 feet, but he must not be startled without a better chance



of a dead shot. I'm afraid I must seem rather bloodthirsty—it is only where these German swine are concerned. In private life I wouldn't hardly squash a fly. There is nothing more to tell you really. I'm having a priceless time and I think I'm getting better at it. 'Tell the boys I was askin' about them.'

\*

23rd–24th–25th Jan.

Last night I took a section out to mend our barbed wire, and when I had rigged up a wonderful cheval de frise I found I was in the middle of it. I got out with a few rags still clinging to me, and carried on across our whole front. I am awfully pleased with the result. If the Germans do get through they'll have to bring a change of bags with them, or they'll be ashamed to get up on our parapet.

It was rather exciting out there, as the Germans earlier in the evening had suddenly thrown a searchlight on to a number of civilians working some way behind the lines at reserve trenches, and opened fire with a maxim. I don't think they'll get those chaps to work there again. As it happened we had a party out, but they fell flat with such amazing promptitude that they were not seen. However, the searchlight was not put on to the wire party, and we were hardly sniped at all. The Germans were playing a mouth-organ about 300 yards away, and we all know about the effect of music on the savage breast. The wire cutters would persist in making a loud click, and there was a lot to be done with them. After a bit I sent the section back, and carried on just with my platoon sergeant, who is a fine fellow. Between us we made a thing like Kit's knitting—(query—was that what he was doing it for?).

I went to see a post of six men I've got in a building, and finding one with a cough I took him all the medical



comforts I had, including formalin and quinine. He is still alive! We had a corporal wounded right behind the lines by that beastly machine-gun, but he is quite all right, with a hole in his shoulder. We've told our gunners about the position of the maxim, and they're going to see what they can do. A sergeant discovered in a deserted farm a telephone wire leading up the stairs. I was just going to take a party out and catch a spy when a message came through that it was a bunderbust of our own. Funny if we'd rushed the place, as we nearly did. Went rounds early in the morning and found all correct. I've spent the day so far in the society of a rifle. I've discovered several more loopholes and pushed their faces, and there was one sportsman who signalled an inner, and then kept out of sight! For half an hour I fought a pitched battle with a sniper. He went about the trench firing from different places, but I could see with the glasses when his head blocked a loophole. We took it in turns for a long time—I had a man with a periscope spotting for me, and he registered some near things for the Bosch's face. At last I got a shot in right at the flash of his rifle, and he never answered it or showed again, tho' I scanned the parapet with glasses for some time.

The shooting is rather hard here; the range is a bit over 400, and there is never more than a head to see. Lots of times I could not see the man at all, but got his exact position in the parapet line with glasses, and fired at '9th post from the right, two feet to the left'. By this method I could do quite decent shooting on loopholes 6 by 4 inches. It's rather exciting turning the glasses on to a loophole, and seeing the snipist aiming.

A sergeant just saw three men go behind a clump of bushes about 500 yards off and gave 'three rounds rapid' from his section, and they have not come out again.

We go back to billets to-night very likely, for a few days' rest.

I could not get this posted yesterday, so I'll carry on. The C.O. came and looked round last night. I took a section out to do wire again, and made a glorious mess. We weren't spotted at all, and as there was just a little finishing to be done, I sent the ten men back and carried on. After a bit out came the searchlight, and I did my world-famous imitation of a pancake. The wretched thing came round till it found me out there between the lines, and then stopped for a long look. Brer Rabbit he lay low, and after a bit the limelight was switched off. As soon as I got going on the wire it began coming my way again, and I had to lie down. When it had done I discovered a German sap about 30 yards from me, where they had kept a sniper. Glad he was not at home then. We had parties out working late, but they were not found by the machine-gun. This morning I see testimony to my success yesterday. They've moved their loopholes in the night and hidden them much better, but I can still pick them out with the glasses. I dosed half a dozen just now, and I don't know what happened. The Germans are shelling some buildings 300 yards from here with high explosive, but they don't seem able to hit them properly. Cheero for the present.

Back in billets next day. We were relieved last night and marched home by platoons. Just as we were on the road close up to the lines, some company got the wind up and started rapid fire. The Germans thought it was an attack and opened fire too, so the road was fairly unhealthy; the bullets were flying pretty thick, but we had no one hit. We got in rather late and I just went to see my platoon tucked up and then changed my clothes and had dinner. Then I went to bed, being very tired.

This morning I've inspected the rifles and kit and looked round generally. By the way, I had one lad with a frost-bitten foot, who had to be carried in last night.

I told him what to do and inspected the injured member, which looked rather bad. However, he's lots better this morning, thanks to the rifle oil I made him rub in, and he is not 'going sick' at all.

It is very nice coming in again to rest. Of course it is very hard work officering in the trenches, and we don't get much sleep, but it is a glorious game.

Please say if there is anything you want to know about particularly. I can't possibly tell you everything that happens, as they're happening all the time fast.

The companies solemnly parade for the baths to-day, where they get clean undies and have their uniforms disinfected. It's a very good arrangement indeed.

\*

27th Jan.

Went to bed about 3.30 this morning, as I had a digging party out of one platoon which was not my own. It was very cold and dreary, but we were not sniped at all. This morning I've got ten new men in my platoon, all very good. There's one ex-grenadier, and four are 1st class shots.

I got all particulars about kit and so on, which is really quite a considerable business. We are supposed to know all about our little commands, such as how many false teeth the lance-corporal's mother-in-law has got, as it is only by knowledge of such detail that we can solve the personal equation of the l.-cpl. concerned. The Germans put a few shells over us in the town this morning, but it was a half-hearted business, and our guns have been going for them ever since. A lieutenant in my company captured a Frenchman (at 5 in the morning) apparently signalling with a light. He's now in our guard room.

I've censored the whole company's letters this morning and found some gems. I will try and remember some when

I write next. There was one entirely charming ending which I will copy: Best love from 'your faithful Sun'.

\*

Jan. 27th.

I've been learning how to throw hand-grenades, which are made of old jam tins, scrap iron, and gun cotton, with a time fuse attached. The R.E. make them in their spare time. One of this type killed eight Germans and wounded twenty-two, so they are not bad things.

Censored letters most of the morning. I found a priceless lie in one of them which had been written in the trenches. (Of course you know the Germans never put their noses outside their trench.) 'And now I must draw the line, for the Germans are advancing and my rifle I must load' (!).

Of course we were all expecting a huge attack on the Kaiser's birthday, but nothing happened. We came to the conclusion that at 12 on the night of the 26-27th all their guns would open fire and they would advance all along. As a matter of fact I had a platoon digging just behind our lines from 10.30 till 2.30, and I had decided just what to do; but it would have been rather an awkward situation. I'm glad they stopped where they were. Our gunners of course were trying to spot a chance at two or three gathered together to celebrate the occasion in the big buildings behind their reserves, miles off. However, they don't seem to have had any particular fun.

I've had amazing luck as regards fellow-officers, and I've got a gem of a servant, who does everything for me. I'm getting used to having things done for me—it was very hard at first, after I'd done absolutely everything for myself for two months.

\*



31st Jan.

I'm afraid I have not written for some time ; I've been very hard at it. We came up the night before last without mishap, and the relief was done all right. Spent a hard night on rounds of different kinds. I've got my platoon with me here this time ; before, it was all split up for odd posts. The regiment we relieved had, contrary to its custom, done some work on the trench, and left it in quite a decent state. We have been working at it pretty hard and trying to get a section of trench, which has long been flooded, into use again by means of a wonderful pump. We have had a 'partial success' (local). I've been working like two niggers at packing the sandbags, which the men haven't the sense to do properly.

Last night I got out and made dummy loop-holes to draw sniping fire. I've done three beauties, holes about 6 in. square (and 9 in. deep) with a wooden frame in them. They've all got a good five feet of earth behind them in the parapet. There was the deuce of a lot of sniping yesterday across the way. They hit my steel loop-hole plate twice, so I signalled 'inners'. When they get the sandbags we call it an 'outer'.

Yesterday evening we brought up a new machine gun, and opened fire with it just after dark. The Germans shouted and cat-called and made rude remarks like 'try again', 'pretty good' and 'vot vos dat?' It was quite amusing listening to them ; they seem a very decent lot here (they're Saxons). There is an old farm out between the lines where there are some chickens still left. Our chaps go out often at night and bag eggs, also chickens. There is a garden with cabbages, and they are brought in regularly. They have to go about it pretty quietly as it is rather nearer the Germans than us.

One of my sentries spotted a sniper last night crawling up a certain hedge, so we are going to lay him out to-night if possible, as they nearly always use the same place for some time.

My rats are still going strong ; I've asked L.H.S.M. to send a trap. Our dog is getting very friendly, but the cat does not like us.

It is very cold just now. Yesterday was frosty, and the nights are very bright ; but to-day it is snowing and very bleak. They've been trying to shell the German reserve trenches, but two shells have burst short, just to show that they are independent. A message came round to know if these premature bursts had found us. They had not ; and now they seem to have chucked it. The German guns put some high explosives a few hundred yards off, but they have stopped too. Last night they fired at poor old C. company with a trench mortar, but did not get the range right.

This is all very amusing. Every now and then I look at myself from the outside as I am now, and it makes me shriek with laughter to think that I am doing absurd things like this. Ordinarily, of course, they seem very natural, and I feel I've been doing them all my life. It is only when I compare this with my normal habits of life that it all seems so gloriously out of joint.

Before we came up we had a regular parade of the men oiling their feet to prevent frost-bite. (A parade means a formal business of the companies.) We are going to do this regularly, and I think it is a very good egg.

Our dug-out here is quite a nice little place, with a couple of shelves, and a hook on which we hang a brazier thing. We have our blankets brought up in the officers' mess cart, which also carries any kit we want to bring. The food is the same as in billets, and is very good. My servant is the cook when we are here. Captain Murphy and I live in this little grey home, and two other subs live about 300 yards from here, and we can only visit at night. They've got a wonderful dug-out about ten feet by six, ours is about six by four. We have no difficulty in getting straw, and the place is really very

comfortable. The parapet is now very good, and at last I can stand upright in this trench. Before, I always had to keep my head under my arm or wherever Sir John Mandeville's johnnies used to carry theirs. It was rather tiring. Luckily we have no difficulty in getting fascines or sandbags or anything for revetments, as there are a lot of R.E. stores about.

The Germans are shelling again with a very heavy gun. The shell comes strolling along some seconds after the report, so they must be using a very high angle. With a lot of these long range guns you never hear the report at all, only the scritch-whistling and then BLAM.

Thank you awfully for the parcel. The warrior is resting from war's alarms in his dug-out and making a pig of himself with the pineapple things, not to mention the ginger. It is snowing now and very cold and raw, but this is all very nice indeed. The Germans are sniping a lot and keep hitting the roof of the dug-out.

\*

1st Feb.

All going well. Last night we had to do wire again. There was a brilliant moon, and they put the machine gun on to us! I had a stream handy and fell in gracefully. I sat in it for some time and improved the shining hour by winding barbed wire all in and about it. Then I sent the section back and carried on with two sergeants, but they all turned out and fired volleys at us, so we solemnly crawled home on all fours. Later it got a bit cloudy and I went out with the captain, and we worked till 5 in the morning and got lots done. They did not snipe at us very much. We had a little panic about a German patrol, but it soon blew over. Slept late this morning. Shelling and sniping pretty heavy to-day, but former not on this trench. I'm very well and happy.



2nd Feb.

Last night we had to work at the wire again, but it was not a bit exciting, as the moon was clouded over. We could hear Johnnie German doing the same 350 yards off, knocking in posts and fixing up (as we can see this morning) a most awful fence. I don't think stray cattle will break through their hedge or ours either. They seem a very cheery lot opposite. They are always singing and doing 'milk-o' calls, especially when we fire volleys in the night. Once they held a light up when we had fired on them, a thing I wouldn't have done for anything. We had some hand grenades sent up yesterday. I am in charge of the company bomb-throwers, and it is a most inspiring job.

We've had a message that the gunners are going to shell some houses in front of us where German snipers congregate, but they have not done it yet (3.30).

By the way, you asked me about my servant. He is a dark, medium-sized man, with a face like a goat, and a heart of gold. His name is Hudson. I can get my clothes washed, and also myself as much as I want to, and in hot water too. Of course we only wash when we are in billets. The men get hot baths about once a fortnight and a change of undies, and we can get hot baths whenever we want them and have the time, which is really not very often, as it is a long trek to the baths. It is raining now and has been for some time, and everything is rather dismal here, but we're being relieved to-night. I shall be glad to get to bed and have my boots off, as I've been barbed-wiring nearly all these last four nights.

When I was going my rounds I saw a hare sitting on the road in the moonlight, so I seized a rifle and rolled him over, and my platoon made the most of him! There was not much left when they'd done with him. One of my lads



once went out of the trench (without permission) to a farm between the lines to steal chickens. While so engaged he ran into a German who was doing the same. As neither had a rifle, they nodded and passed on.

I'm wearing the most wonderful get-up, gum-boots, a goatskin coat, a large scarf, and a sou'-wester hat which was given me by a fellow officer. It must look rather startling. I've not had the chance to take any more photos.

\*

Dans les tranchées.

3rd Feb.

Thank you very much for your dear letter. I am enjoying this most awfully and feel I am really learning no end of things. . . . Bullets are very much in evidence here, as they have a way of turning a machine gun on to the road after dark. Last time they did that the first bullet grazed the collar of my Burberry, and I was in the ditch pretty well before the next one arrived. I should think that some people would have been rather winded, but a saving sense of humour prevents anything more than a moment of tense funk, after which the balance seems to right itself.

I don't know if you know the crack of the bullet as it passes over you? It seems to be a phenomenon you get when the rifle is pointed directly at or over you. I hazard it is the report of the rifle travelling up the vacuum caused by the bullet, but I know nothing about it. When they are sniping at you, sharp ear-splitting cracks sound round your head and immediately above. Often you don't hear the crack, and the bullet passes with a hissing whistle that is over in the fraction of a second. You really hear the bullet 100 or 150 yards before it gets to you and after it has passed, but it is all over before you have heard it almost. If a bullet

strikes a wall or something close to you, you hardly hear the whistle before it strikes—and it always strikes in a most convincing way, like an immensely powerful stab. The thing that is most impressive about bullets is their speed, which is, of course, so much greater than anything we ever see or hear ordinarily that it cannot be imagined—it surprises me afresh every time, and I have heard quite a few. Of course the dear old shells that fly round here go much slower. I don't think I shall ever get out of the way of following the sound with my eyes, as I would the swish of a duck's wings at flight. Of course when they are coming straight on top of you, you don't hear them for so long, and they seem to come more quickly, for more reasons than one.

I'm getting on, I think, as well as I ever hoped to with officers and men. I mean I could not have hoped to get on better. I like all the people I have to deal with.

You can trust me to look after myself. I take no liberties.

This is constantly turning up: 'Tell all the boys I was askin' for them.' Please do, and give them all my love. Cheero.

\*

4th Feb.

Last night I had to take a party out to put up a new sort of entanglement, which I considered useless, but by the addition of some extra wire, in a particular way I devised for the occasion, I made it into a very good obstacle. I was very much pleased with it, and so was the captain. We were not fired at except going and coming, when we had a few volleys round and about us from a longish range.

This morning we were inspected by the General, and he was awfully pleased. He collared me and asked me all about my platoon—things which no gentleman should be expected to know—such as how many I had doing Field

Punishment (I had three, and I knew it too!). He seemed very much bucked with my bhoys, and quite satisfied with all my answers. He finished up with 'That's very good.' We live in all good fellowship in this place, and enjoy life a lot. The officers are nearly all very Irish, and quite inconceivably amusing. I do nothing but laugh all day and all night.

I told you about my jolly old servant; we pay these chaps about fifteen shillings a month, and I've not paid mine yet: I am waiting for some money to turn up, as I've got at present £1. 0. 0½. In the morning he brings me cocoa or tea when he wakes me, takes my clothes and brushes them, cleans my boots and equipment, and looks after all my stuff. When we go up, he packs my things and does all the business of getting it brought up; when we are up, I shout for him if I want anything, and altogether he is a very useful little man. I am getting him transferred to my platoon.

I can hear them shelling an aeroplane just outside. They are always at it, but the German does not seem to mind a bit. We are getting lovely weather now, and it is not very cold.

I was evidence at a court martial the other day—beastly job. I know this is a shocking dull letter, but you brought it on yourself by asking for details.

\*

5th Feb.

Billets.

Last night suddenly a tremendously heavy fire broke out about a mile south of us. There were heavy guns, machine guns, and rifles all going as hard as they could. We turned all the men out and prepared to reinforce, or do anything they might want us for; it gradually blew over. We sent the men back with orders to be ready at a minute's notice, and went to our quarters. After a few hours, as nothing

happened, we went to bed, and were not disturbed any more. Apparently the German artillery had begun shelling our reserve trenches, and our guns had lost their tempers, and fairly let them have it. The German infantry thought it was an attack and started firing like mad (it was a dark night). Our infantry thought they were attacking and let it rip! After a bit they both found it was a washout, and mutual confidence was restored. Our line of trenches was not affected by this panic, but we thought at the time that we could hear them firing as well. It was a topping game altogether as far as I was concerned, and I enjoyed the whole affair tremendously. The 'stand to' was done very well and quickly. This morning I inspected as usual and got things tidy. Censored the letters.

Just got a post. Post corporal staggers in with something wrapped up in a newspaper. It appears to be a large mess as big as an ordinary cranium, which, on examination, proves to be remains of a large tin of honey, which has leaked all over the country. There must be a sticky trail from here to Boulogne. There is about half a pint left, which will be very welcome indeed. I am writing to Eling Farm to thank them. (Pause while I open a letter from you and one from C.) What priceless letters you write!

It is glorious weather that we are having entirely. Good-bye for a bit. I am going to have lunch.

Had it—very nice too. Heard we have got a beastly digging party to-night.

Clarke has just come round from his mess and I am going out for a bit with him.

\*

6th Feb.

Had to take a beastly digging party out last night 10.30 to 3.30, but as a matter of fact I rather enjoyed it, as it was



a lovely night, though it is very hard to keep awake after midnight at the end of a strenuous day. We were not fired at much, but we came in for a lot of stray dropping shots from the lines, which bend back on either side of us. I had no one hit, but the two platoons I relieved lost a man and a sergeant-major, by rotten bad luck, as none of those bullets were meant for us.

When we were marching off I caught one lad trying to slip away, and before we had got a hundred yards from billets he tried it again! There is a court martial waiting for Jeremiah.

The men were working awfully well, and the only trouble I had was right at the beginning when I relieved Broad, as one of my corporals began to fight one of his lance-corporals, because he said the other made a remark which he 'would not be takin' from him or any other man in the rig'ment'. However, I jumped on him hard, and he did his work very well afterwards. This is a funny and entirely delightful life!

The worst of these jaunts is the journey back over awful country in the dark, when we are all tired. 'It's a long way to Tipperary, and shure 'tis a long way back,' was a remark I overheard. By the way, when I was out with my party at work, 'all of a sudden there was a bang,' and up came a general!! He looked round, and seemed pleased with the work, and then withdrew into the purple cloud—it was too dark to see his eyes, but his cigar glowed contentedly. Talking of his cigar—I was walking round seeing the men work, when I saw a red glow of someone smoking. I made a ferocious pounce with my mouth full of foul language, and caught Brigadier-General Doran, for it was indeed he! He had crept up unobserved, and must have thought that I came to meet him very smartly! It was lucky I spotted him in time to tame my tongue a bit. I was

just going to say, 'Who the —— is that smoking? Put that cigarette out, you —— !!!'

Yesterday afternoon I went to see a sort of 'Follies' show that the A.S.C. officers have got up. There were some very good songs, and I enjoyed it tremendously. It would have been funny if a shell had come in through the roof! It was really an awfully good show, with footlights, &c., and it was held in a big school that they are using as a hospital. This morning my company is having a bath, nay rather, has had it, and I have inspected them, and they looked very clean. Their rifles are very well kept.

By the way, our probation is over, and we are satisfactory! The papers went in yesterday, so I shall get my gazette soon. About messing: Captain Murphy is mess-president and arranges for food, and we pay shares every week; it is about 3f. a day.

Tell everyone that it is *socks* the troops want, *not* mufflers and mittens. I could dispose of any number on my bhoys, as hardly any man has two pairs.

\*

8 Feb.

Many happy returns of the day (Der Tag). I'm very sorry I can't see you and help to eat your cake, but I enclose a little souvenir allemand, which came through a sand-bag and stopped dead when it saw Wilhelm.

I mustn't tell you where I am, as it is a secret, or what I'm doing, which is a still bigger secret, but I'm pretty much on my own with two platoons and a brother lieutenant who has got flu or a bad cold or something, so I have to work double time, which means all day and most of the night; but I have never enjoyed myself more. I think I'm getting very good work out of these men.

The other night we started out to pay a call on a neighbouring officer, to wit, Clarke, but we had not gone twenty yards when 'crack, crack, crack' went the machine-gun, so we lay side by side in the road and waited for it to blow over. Then we about-turned and crawled back. However, last night I managed to get there without being seen, and had a friendly mug of rum with him and a talk, and then strolled back. That was the only half-hour I took off, barring meals, between 8 in the morning and 3 next morning (this morning). There was the deuce of a lot to do, and I had the men at it in two hour reliefs, but I went on for ever! The adjutant has been round and is quite pleased!

I was lucky last night, as I came on a burgling Ikona in the shape of a D company sergeant, who was just going to take our sandbags. If I had not come up my lads would have given them up cheerfully, but things like that are precious in this country, and we would all commit murder for a sheet of corrugated iron. I also caught two C company men stealing straw, and fairly flayed them. I am getting quite good at trouncing men nowadays, which is quite an acquirement. I always laugh at myself afterwards, and chuckle over my own ferocity. You should see me being really fierce!!

I found a couple of small kids wandering about here yesterday, not worrying a bit about odd bullets, but quietly wandering along the road like any Yattendon babes. I had to go out, though I was in a blue funk, and get them into the ditch, and make them crawl back out of the way. They loved it, but I didn't a bit! Of course what civilians there are left lie pretty doggo day and night, and don't need much coercion to keep them away from the lines. Those kids had come out to look for 'souvenirs' and were very lucky not to get them. (I may tell you the word is regularly used in this euphemistic sense.)

My best section commander threw a drunk the other night and will get a court martial. It is awfully sickening, as we have not got good men to spare, and the least he can get is reduction to the ranks.

The people that we took over this place from were awful blighters. They belong to a regiment which we relieve in the trenches, turn and turn about, and they take our billets when we are up. They are a slack lot, and never do a stroke while they are up in the way of repairing the trench or putting up wire, though we are always hard at it. Did I tell you that there were some chickens at a farm in front of the lines? Well, they have taken every single one!

The Dutchmen have been shelling a farm some 300 yards off, and making a beastly noise, but not making much difference to the farm. They dropped one Black Maria in a pond, and it sent up a column a good 50 yards high. They have stopped now, but our guns are still carrying on. Their sniping has been pretty heavy lately.

\*

9th Feb.

Still going strong. Everything going well and very much as usual. Had a party digging last night but there was no excitement. The horse that draws the ration cart was hit but is not very bad! Cheero.

\*

10th Feb.

I worked hard yesterday and then had a digging party, which was sniped at like blazes, but no one was hit. Went to bed about 2. By the way, when I had got my two platoons started with their digging I strolled off to try and find a neighbouring trench where Daly was. It was pitch dark, and there was an



awful little slimy plank across a wide ditch full of water. I had got to about the middle with great care when BANG!—WHISH!—FIZ!—and a star shell from one of our guns burst just over me, throwing out half a dozen things like arc-lamps which gradually descended round me. That rather upset me, and when a sniper saw me and had a shot, I fell in! I waited till the sniper had done, and then came out, and called on Daly, rather wet, but not a bit astonished, like the Elephant's Child. While I was in Daly's dug-out they put another star shell over, closely followed by a performing shrapnel. It was a bunderbust to spot a machine gun which plays on the road, which of course they dismount by day; I think they knocked it out as it has not opened its mouth since.

The Dutchmen have been shelling a lot lately. The night we came out they pushed a few into the town and set a house on fire. Yesterday they were hard at it with 8 inch guns on a farm close by, and also put about a dozen on to a bit of trench, wounding the new officer-man called Yonge.<sup>1</sup>

I've just seen a Dutch aeroplane, and gone out and told my lads to keep under cover, as we are popularly believed in German circles not to be here. By the way, Dutch means Allyman, in case you don't know.

The other night I stood up on the parapet when everything was quiet, and said in my best parade voice: 'Der Kaiser ist ein verdammter Schweinhund' and then got down—quick. The Dutchmen did not say anything but turned the machine-gun on to where they thought the blasphemy came from! I sat on the bottom of the trench and laughed while the zip-zip-zip went on over my head.

One rather good thing we have is the habit of putting a shell or two on their trenches just after dark, when they are likely to be 'standing to' and out of their shelters.

<sup>1</sup> Died of wounds later.

Sometimes when we are out digging, the place is lit up like this—flash: flash-flash. Then there is a bit of a pause and then: blam: blam-blam, behind us, which is immediately followed by the shells screaming overhead in a covey. Then as they are dying away in the distance, comes right away beyond another *flash: flash-flash*, and after a pause of some seconds a small and far-away—*wump: wump-wump* of the shells bursting a mile or so behind the German front line. It is topping the way the rhythm of the battery firing corresponds with the flashes and burst of the shells all those miles away. Conversely it is not quite so amusing, I mean when you hear the German howitzers blow off one, two, three, four, and know that there will be four souvenirs in a very short time.

My colleague here has bought a court martial to-day, so I'm in charge of half the company, that is about 100 great Irishmen. It is great sport, and it may amuse you to know that I have rather more use for myself now than I have ever had before. Funny, isn't it?

L. H. S. M. has sent me a rat trap, but I am not in the rat trench now. I shall keep it till I am, and then take the offensive!

It is a very difficult journey from here to where we are digging, and the sailing directions are like this. Across field to haystack; bear half left to dead pig; cross stream 25 yards below dead horse; up hedge to shell-hole, and then follow the smell of three dead cows across a field, and you'll arrive at exactly the right place! The best of these landmarks is that you can use them on the darkest night. I brought my lads back by a short cut I devised for myself, including a couple of dead dogs and a certain amount of one German. It is a much better way, and I got the bearing so well that I walked right into the last cow without even smelling her, so strong was the wind blowing the other way.

Did I tell you I fell into a sewer? I got two sanitary men by the slack of their bags and made them cover it in with brushwood, and then see if they could drain it. Under my guidance they tickled it and coaxed it till it purred contentedly, instead of its usual raucous buz, and then before it knew what was happening it was nearly all drained away down a deep hole. That is exactly what I think of the Kaiser and his army!

I've done a certain amount of wire again, using old ploughs and harrows and things like that to wind up in it, and it looks lovely. There was a panic last night that they were attacking, but it was a washout. I'm glad they didn't when my two platoons were out.

It is a lovely day and we are doing awfully well for comfort here. I frequently get my boots off at night. We go into billets again to-night. (It's all right, it is an English plane after all.) I'm enclosing another souvenir, in case you may like them; I think the German bullets are rather sweet; they are a bit sharper than ours. I could make those little bits of South African shell at Burnt Hill look silly if I could send you some of the bits that we get here. The thickness of metal is heaps greater and the exploding charge much heavier in these high explosive shells now. Shrapnel is all much the same. They're shelling an English plane now nearly over me with a very heavy shrapnel that they use for that job, but they can't touch her.

Our papers are sometimes late, but we nearly always get a summary of events of the day before, so we do very well for news. We have not had a mail to-day or yesterday, so I shall have several letters to look forward to.

I am afraid this is all hog-wash that I've written. I can't tell you the really interesting things now, but I will one of these days.

How do you like this for Irish? 'They (the Germans) would have no mercy on us if they had the chance.'



11th Feb.

Relieved last night all right and came back here to find that the regiment that relieved us had made a lot of things that should remain here permanently. Foamed at the mouth.

This morning everything working as usual. I'm going to try and get into a certain town this afternoon, about 10 miles away, to see the old crowd. Clarke and Broad are coming as well. Bullets grow rather thickly along the roads near the trenches nowadays, so we avoid them.

\*

13th Feb.

I went into a certain Bally Hole yesterday, walking with one Broad. A sportsman in a car gave us a lift over the last mile, but we walked about six. We went and looked up all our old companies and officers. My old section were all in evidence, and Wilfrid Adams was there too, besides several other Paulines who had come out in the draft. I had lunch with my old company officers, not to mention tea, and then we went up to the house where the staff captains reside who first set our young feet in the path of wisdom. They were awfully pleased to see us, or pretended to be, and seemed much cheered with life altogether. Captain Williams said he had written to the Leinsters to say that they had the pick of his division anyway!!! We looked up all our H.Q. people, the colonel and major and doctorman, &c. They told us they had had very good accounts of all of us, and seemed happy altogether. I saw lots of the new embryo officers. There are some very nice things among them whom I used to know well. They are just off to a certain G.H.Q. to do the machine gun course before getting their leave and joining their regiments.



Yesterday I got a huge parcel from Uncle Albert, which contains, I believe, 1000 cigarettes for the troops. They will be bucked !

By the way, Broad and I, coming back from the said Hole, only caught a train by the skin of our teeth. It was full of officers returning from leave, whom we found magnificent company. We went about four miles in it, which is as far as it goes towards the Bosches, and then got out and stormed a cart which was going to this wee town ; we arrived about 8 in the evening. We never paid anything for our joy-ride in the train !

I caught another spy the other day. I said, 'Vous êtes espion!!' He said, 'Non, non ; je suis trop français pour cela,' and spat copiously on the floor to prove it. That and a pass he had convinced me, and I let him go. He took his hat off to me and bowed when I said, 'C'est bien ; bouge t'' (which is rather a good expression I've picked up) and said 'Bonjour, M. le colonel, merci bien.' So I kicked him behind and we parted, firm friends. There was about half the company looking on and applauding, which made it all extremely funny. I can't tell you the circumstances of this capture of mine, as it is all rather a secret, nor can I tell you what I've been doing these last four days I was up. It was all magnificent fun, and the mighty ones were rather pleased. It was defensive works of a kind, and I took a lot of trouble with them, and tried all sorts of odd ideas.

This morning I have inspected arms, equipment, and ammunition, and it was all very good. I've got rather a lot of men sick ; but do you know that since I joined not a man in my platoon has been hit ! This *sounds* very creditable, but it has got absolutely nothing to do with me ! It means that they've learnt to look after themselves. Moreover we've been extremely lucky with shell fire.

The company goes to the baths this afternoon at a place about two miles off, and I've got to take them there, and see that they wash behind their ears.

It is pouring with rain again nowadays—just as we had got things a bit dry and firm.

\*

14th Feb.

Thank you every day (and twice on Sundays) for the lovely watch. It is simply ripping of you to give me such a beauty. I had him out on a digging party last night (6 till 1), and I could see the time perfectly well, though it was as black as your hat. I'm calling him Jehu.

I am getting on, I think, very well indeed. This has made a lot of difference to me already, and I feel much more generally useful than I used to. I love every job I have to do, and take the greatest pleasure in work like putting farms in a state of defence, which allows room for one's own ideas.

I can't give you any particulars of the work I've been doing just now, but one day I will tell you all about it, if you like.

I don't think I've thanked you for the hand warmer. It is a charming thing, and I've used it a lot. I gave it to one poor devil with pneumonia in the trenches and he loved it, but he pegged out in two days. There are a good many men with influenza, but we have had no enteric. The men are tough as leather. We officers of course have no excuse for getting ill, as we have good dug-outs and the chance of changing our socks, &c. I'm feeling full of buck and looking after myself well, besides being looked after by a jolly good servant.

\*

14th Feb.

Last night had a party out working from 6 till 1, and it seemed a long time. I walk about and see that that they do it properly, listening to the bullets, and spiking mangold-wurzels with a magnificent stick I've found with an iron spike on the end! It is a fascinating game, if a little childish. Inspected by new brigadier this morning, and it went off all right. Then I paraded my bomb-splashers, and lectured them on the effects of gun-cotton on the German body, if combined with bullets and a jam tin. I have to go to a field general court martial this afternoon and deliver panegyric on accused (one of my N.C.O.s.). Wish me luck (and him)! All very well here.

\*

16th Feb.

We came up two days ago and relieved all right. My captain is in hospital with flu, so Young and I run the company between us. We found the trenches in an awful mess, as it has been raining hard lately, and the people we relieved had not only not done any work on the trenches, but had actually taken down some of our sandbags and used them for some game of their own. So we put in some very hard work at the parapet in the rain, sticking all the time in most awful mud. However it is a bit better now.

I took out a small number of men for a certain purpose and nearly caught a German patrol the other night. I had my revolver trained on the tummy of one of them in case they saw us, but they did not, and we carried on. I was in a funk! However, some of my men, I believe, were in a worse funk than I was. We sat in a ditch and waited for them to get miles away, as we particularly did not want to

be seen. They passed down a hedge about 50 yards off, and one of them hiccoughed!

I'm sorry I can't write any more, as I'm awfully sleepy.

\*

17th Feb.

Working pretty hard. It continues to rain steadily, and things are rather dismal. Last night when I was out in front looking for a hare which one Bate had shot, I saw a wheelbarrow some way out, and effected its capture with great circumspection. When they sent up a flare I got underneath and curled up quite comfily! I took it in tow and brought it back to the trench amid applause! It is the most valuable thing we have now. I'll try and write a decent letter when we get back to billets, but I can't now. We blew off one of our bombs for practice, and it certainly carried conviction! Had some revolver practice too. I've not heard from you for three days, so I expect there will be a nice fat mail sometime. There was a good deal of shelling yesterday, but not on us (the oysters said).

\*

20th Feb.

Here we are in billets again.

I had a lovely time this last spell up, as Murphy was in hospital and Young and I were running the company. We've got several new subs who seem all right. It is fun being the experienced officer and giving tips to a man who was through the Boer war!

The weather was rotten, and the trenches in an awful muck, but we got them pretty decent. We had one panic about an attack, but it did not happen. I went out to visit an advanced post, and heard the Germans moving in the



slush. I thought they were advancing, so we got ready ; but it must have been only a patrol or working party, for they went back after a bit, and so did I. There were a lot of aeroplanes about one day, and our guns were firing shrapnel at them. One of them was hit, but managed to get back. I saw one of ours knocked out by German shrapnel about a week ago, but she managed to glide back somehow with her engine stopped.

The day we came out our guns fired three shells into the German trenches in front of us, just to show what they could do. It was lovely shooting, and at least one dug-out went up in the air.

The German sniping was pretty insistent, but not very accurate. It seems to me that their shooting is not much good opposite us. Does the name 'Parkin' suggest any locality to you ?<sup>1</sup> Well, we've got a lot of them out here now. I think they'll be awfully good when they've got into it.

I was in the rat trench this last time, but I forgot to take the trap up ! I'll remember next time.

I'm sorry, but I can't think of anything interesting, so I'd better wash out. You seem to think that I've been doing silly things,<sup>2</sup> but I hardly ever do anything I've not got to. Anyway, I *promise* you not to do anything without good reason, purely from *joie de vivre*. There now ! I'm very well and braced with life. I hope you're all going strong. Had a bath to-day. If you think it dangerous I won't do it again !

\*

21st Feb.

Everything going on very nicely. Murphy has come out of hospital ; moreover Young and Macartney have been awarded the Military Cross for some work before I came here. I'm

<sup>1</sup> Canada.      <sup>2</sup> cf. page 67.

running the mess now, and go out and forage every morning. Discovered a new sort of beer and had a vote of confidence passed in me!! It came out again all right and I'm very well and happy. Was waked at 7.15 this morning and told to march a party of 200 to R.C. church at 7. Had them going by 7.20.

\*

22nd Feb.

I'm managing the mess here—some mess! It is rather fun, but hard work. Can you imagine me adding up the accounts! I've not had one digging party this time in billets, and am feeling very fat and comfortable.

The whole place is full of officers and men of the *Parkin* type. The first I saw of them was when I was coming back from the trenches with my platoon and saw long rows of deaders laid out on the road, which proved to be live Mohawks fast asleep! Goodness knows what they were doing there, as there were about 200 apparently sans officers. There was one sergeant awake and he it was who told me who they were (I'd guessed). They were bound for the trenches, and I've heard since that they got there, so that was all right. We have a lot of the officers here and they are very amusing. They make an awful noise and fight most of the time in a friendly way. Their men smile broadly when they meet them, or us, and give a cheerful 'good morning' with their pipes in their mouths and their hands in their pockets. They *were* pleased when they had a man hit, and really felt like soldiers. They have got a beautiful rifle and splendid machine guns; I think they'll do extremely well. They are very big fine-looking divils and as long as they don't get 'wind up' they will be very useful here and everywhere. The phenomenon of 'wind' is very strange. New troops suffer most from it, but

everyone is liable to be affected. It's chief symptom is rapid fire (at nothing at all) in the night, and this is horribly contagious. You can hear it run down the line sometimes like wind on grass, and it is an awful nuisance, as everyone within earshot 'stands to'. The poor old Germans get it, too, sometimes.

We have a regular business of foot-greasing the day we go up and it seems to work rather well. The men are doing well for clothes, &c., now, but they find it hard to get pants sometimes. Could you manage to send a few pairs of thick coarse pants for a few men in my platoon, who have been unlucky when the clothes have been going? Socks, of course, are the chief difficulty as they wear out so soon.

I must get some sort of status soon, as I've been at this over a month now. I've been in this country four months about!!

Two of the companies did a route march yesterday under the supervision of a German aeroplane. It is nice to feel that people take an interest in us. I've not had a mail to-day, but I expect I shall later on. I do like the mails, and I wish I could write decently interesting letters, but I seem so dull nowadays, though I never lose interest myself. I'm better (and fatter) than I was when I went home, I mean *came* home.

\*

23rd Feb.

We came up last night and I'm writing in our dug-out, which has been improved and enlarged by the other crowd under the auspices of the R.E. The trench is much drier and generally better than a few weeks ago. This morning there was a thick mist, so we could carry on with our work on the parapet. Young and I went out and looted a farm in front. We got a framed picture for the dug-out, some glasses,

a decanter, a ladder, and some coat-hangers ! We came back to the trench à la Kronprinz with our arms full of things of human interest. The mist began to rise after a bit, and I was watching for it very carefully. As soon as the wind got up and things began to clear, I brought all my parties in and made them load and try for a chance. After a bit we caught glimpses of Our Brother Opposite just knocking off work, and we dosed him vigorously till he got to ground. Think we got three—anyway they were awfully sick and fired like blazes. I made a rifle to-day—one which was left in our trench on the decease of its owner. I couldn't do much good with it as the sighting is very peculiar. I gave it up after a bit, and when I saw a German looking through a hole in a wooden shed in front of their lines, I got my own rifle and put a bullet through just under his peep-hole.

You wis askin' about the boys in my reformatory. My sergeant-man was rejoyced—(he was a corp'ril once).

Our guns have just been shelling in front of us, and now the Germans are doing a bit over on the left. On the whole we are on very good terms with these Germans in front now, and we hardly ever shoot at one another, so life is nice and peaceful. I've got rather a lot to do now, so good-bye, my dears, I hope you are all as happy and fit as I am.

P.S. Is May married yet? If so, why?

\*

25th Feb.

So sorry I've not written lately, but I've been hard-worked here in the sewers. We have had a lot to do with draining and so on, besides wire, which is being reduced to a fine art. Our parapet is very good now and would stop any old bullet. We've got the water under at last, but it keeps raining and filling up again.



A lot of *Parkins* were attached to us for 24 hours to find their feet, just as we did in the Artists. Young and I had an officer in our dug-out, and there were about fifteen with my platoon. I'm most awfully pleased with them in every way. They're keen as mustard, cheerful, plucky, and they work like niggers. The discipline is of fine quality, different from ours, with a touch of the best territorialism, in that officers and men work together and not on different planes. The men are too much gentlemen to take liberties, and the officers are quite capable of looking after their own fellows or any others. At their own request I took out a party to do wire, and we did a Cook's tour to the listening post and round about the front. It was most amusing, when they first came up, to see their naïve eagerness to fire their rifles. There is nothing sophisticated about them, and they are all frankly out to learn, and work with a nice clean enthusiasm and simplicity which is the best thing about the Colonies, I think. In fact they are exactly what they ought to be. We've got a new lot up early this morning, the first batch having finished their time without a casualty, though they fired over the parapet all day (and most of the night) at any loop-hole or spade they caught sight of. When we were doing wire we had a couple on watch further out (Leinsters) and suddenly one came in to report that 40 or 50 Allymans were coming up the bed of a stream towards us. We washed out the party and 'stood to'. It happened that D company had a working party near and they manned the trench with us, and we made up a very strong firing line. I got my boys ready—and the *Parkins*, who were shrieking with joy inside—and then I asked where Mr. Young was? Oh, Mr. Young had gone out to meet them with his hands in his pockets! He would. I gave the order that no one was to fire, and constituted myself a search-party. I went out beyond the wire on my tummy till I heard

someone coming along. I covered my man and said, 'Who's that?' 'Young!' He'd been along the stream and there was nothing there, but we heard a wonderful squawking of hens at a farm within 60 yards of it (and us). That was the explanation! So we stood easy again.

They wanted an officers' patrol to go out sometime, so Young and I went on after that and crawled down a hedge among mangold-wurzels, over lightly frozen ground that scrunched like grinding coffee. We got about 100 yards from their trenches, perhaps a bit less, and listened to them talking and working. I could not understand much, but I got a word every now and then. There were two sportsmen having a walk close in front of us talking sixty to the dozen—I think they were officers, but we heard nothing of any use. Most of the men were doing wire about 60 yards off us, and we could hear everything they did. After a bit, some blighter in our trenches fired, and the bullet ricocheted up close to us into the middle of this little party, but apparently did not hit them. They hated that, and when our fellows started shouting insults—the favourite one is 'Allyman Bully Beef' suggesting that they don't get enough to eat, and always riles them absolutely mad—they began to go back to their trenches. We could hear our fellows shouting 'Allyman no good' and '—— the Kaiser', and they were getting bored with us. After a while it came —'Allyman Bully Beef!' Bang—bang—bang, off went the German rifles, and the machine gun joined in. Young rolled into the ditch pretty quick, into two feet of very cold water. I stopped where I was, and made a noise like a turnip. The machine gun fired slick up our hedge, searching vertically, and I was glad when it was over, as a great stream of bullets went past just over the ditch, and they raised their elevation as they fired, so they passed our place pretty soon, and went over us. We about-turned as

soon as they stopped and did good time on all fours and finally on two legs; but they heard us and started again. However, we got behind an old house and then went home—poor old Young soaked and chattering with cold; me shrieking with laughter at him, as he had on a goatskin and it was rubbed up the wrong way and he looked like a hedgehog that has had a blind. We made a good fire when we got in, and dried him a bit, and we went to bed about 3 in the morning, after seeing the *Parkins* off. Up at seven this morning, feeling as fresh as anything.

I spotted a German steel loop-hole plate at about 500 yards and put 8 out of 10 shots on to it—it is about 2 ft. 6 by 1 ft. 6. The man behind got awfully sick, and fired rapid all the time, but he was too nervous to hit North France. We've got another Canadian officer in our dug-out now, a thorough sportsman.

I've just heard one of our comic men shout to the sentry, 'Sister Ann, sister Ann, do you see anybody coming?'

I went out the night before last and set my trap between the trench and the wire. I caught a magnificent rat, which I put (dead) in Hudson's dug-out for a little surprise. Soon after I heard, 'Holy Mother!' and a roar of laughter, so I knew he'd put his face on it or something. We are on very good terms with each other, and he did not mind a bit. I've discovered a new sort of cabbage beyond our wire, and it is a great success. Our guns are shelling hard, dealing with a place miles away behind the German lines. We can just hear the shells burst.

I'm awfully fit and enjoying everything very hard. For a change it is a decent day. The General was going round B company trench, and in one place the parapet was about 7 feet high. He at once pounced on a man who was on post there: 'Can you see the German trenches?' 'Sure



I can, sir.' 'I don't believe you can.' 'Stand ye by a minute and Oi'll show ye.' With that he drew back and executed a flying leap across the trench and mounted the parapet with a scrambling rush, immediately slithering back again. When he had picked up his rifle he sprang to attention and said with a broad smile, 'Oi saw them indeed, sir.' Exit Brigadier in a state of collapse. Thus was the situation saved, and the subaltern saved from trouble.

Did you get the Allyman bullets I sent ?

\*

1st March.

White Rabbits.

In billets just now and having a very nice time. I had a digging party the other night, and we spent ten minutes out of our three hours' duty lying on our tummies waiting for the machine gun to stop, which it finally did. We had hundreds of sandbags to fill, which is a beastly job.

We had a route march yesterday for our health. Rather a good remark I heard when a shell knocked a dug-out flat, with a man called Kerrigan inside. From the heap of *débris* came a complaining voice: 'My back is broke and they have the rum spilt on us.' (As a matter of fact he was not hurt at all.)

An outpost man reported the other day that he had seen some Germans go into a farm. 'Into the farm they went and the hens I could hear *roarin'*.' That made me laugh solidly for about three hours.

'There was I feelin' meself all over and askin' the Howly Mother wis I dead or alive.' This after a shell had burst.

The following words aroused a sub from slumber in his dug-out: 'Git up, sor.' 'Wha—what's the matter?'



‘There’s an officer afther seein’ ye.’ ‘What officer?’ ‘Sure I don’t know his name, but it’s a big fat officer that he is.’ This with Bullen-Smith a few feet behind!

Don’t you think this is good writing, which I found in a letter: ‘The people’s houses they had burnt on them and made to brick heaps, and women and little children on the roads no home to go to.’ I think it’s uncommonly good, and gives more idea of it than any other description I’ve seen; but isn’t the structure wonderful?

A bullet chipped a sandbag close to the head of a man of the new draft, and he ducked furiously and then turned round and shouted, shaking his fist: ‘Arrah, ye ——.’ An old soldier who had taken no notice of the bullet, remarked quietly, pulling a bit of sandbag out of his ear, ‘Ah, then, we’ve called them all that before this, and more.’

I believe I told you about our ‘Follies’ entertainment? There is a French girl who sings a song with a very catchy chorus, the tune of which all the men remember, and set words of their own to it. It goes something like this:

bom-bom }  
 Alleman Alleman non plus } bully-bif  
 Plumanapplejam cigarette souvenir!

with variations on a few other words. The true inwardness of bom-bom is this. The French people used to say (they don’t say it now) ‘Allemand BOM-BOM! English bom!’ It has become proverbial now, and we always refer to German shells as Alleman bom-bom for short. You know the song which begins: ‘When that midnight choo-choo leaves for Alabam’? It is sung here with the variation ‘When that midnight Bom-bom goes for Allyman’ and the whole of the words to correspond. They go very well.

By the way, one of the things the Huns shout at us is ‘Chameaux, chameaux,’ referring I suppose to their conception of the English Tommy.

A Hun put a bullet through our tame periscope the other day. I was looking through the bottom of it, and trying to spot where he was sniping from. I had just marked him down when, smash! and the glass flew all over the place. That annoyed me—'got my goat' as the Canadians say—and I went to another part of the trench and punched his loop-hole plate five times running, and he stopped firing. I have hopes that I hit him.

I've been specially complimented by the C.O. on my wire! I've got quite a system of my own, and one of the new Canadian sappers will testify to its efficacy, as it took him about half an hour to get out, which he finally did on the same side as he went in.

There were two German aeroplanes here this morning enjoying a shower of shrapnel.

Goodbye all you dears. I'm very well indeed and as happy as they make them; best of luck to every one.

\*

March 4th.

Very sorry I have not written lately . . . there is an awful lot of work about nowadays. I am in the 'tranches' now, in a dug-out with Young (the one who got the M.C. and, need I say? is still alive). He and I run this half of the Company, and Murphy and Andrews on the other side of the stream do the left half. At night we do watches of two hours in turn, and when we are not on duty there are always working parties to be attended to. Thank God, wire is about done for the present. The other night I was as usual up to my neck in barbed wire, and I saw a party of men strolling along, and shouted 'What platoon are you?'—thinking they were some fatigue party or other.

They were the General staff! The Brigadier was awfully amused, and actually went and got tied up in my wire to

test it. He seemed quite pleased with it. I took them all round the place and answered all their questions. I tried to get them to come to my dug-out and drink rum, but they declined with thanks. I then went and woke up Murphy, and he carried on. I finished off my wire and went to bed. We've had some —— attached to learn things and see life, as we did in the Artists. They did not convince me as much as the Mohawks. We had one of their officers in here, and he rather annoyed us by living on us and then retiring to a secluded place and eating sardines and things on his own. He supplied us with some bread when we ran out, and then sent his servant round to get the remains of a loaf! Hudson told me with great glee. The men were a poor lot compared with, say, the Artists, and had to be watched to see that they sat up and took notice on post duty. They were an awful nuisance, as my platoon had to clear out of a bit of trench at 4 in the morning, and occupy another bit for 24 hours, and then move in again at 4 in the morning. But the others never co-operated in any way to make our work easier.

The other day we had a young siege howitzer shelling some houses 100 yards left front. All day it was Boom-sssh-sssh-swi-SHEEE-een-BLAM, then bricks flying and pink clouds of brick dust. Later on the Huns began shelling a farm behind us where we had some people, but though they got direct hits all over it, not a man was touched. We have got all sorts of things from a farm in front of our wire, a table for the dug-out, two stoves, and any amount of hardware.

I believe we've got Prussians or something beastly up here now, as they snipe like blazes; however, we give as good as we get. Yesterday I plugged one of their periscopes, which they let catch the sun, otherwise we should never have seen it, as it was perfectly hidden in some sticks. They are very careful now about showing their heads,



and the only chances we get are through their loopholes. They hate having their loophole plates hit, and fire rapid—generally at nothing. To-day they spotted a couple of plates where we had two men sniping, and treated them to the deuce of a bombardment. However, a sportsman in another part of the trench saw where they were firing from, and fired rapid at their loopholes till they stopped. Then he shouted ‘Allyman bully beef’ until they started on him, and then the other fellows got going, and plugged one Allyman through the face. Then they washed out, and we took a rest-cure. It was rather a good bit of combination. They fired rifle-grenades at us yesterday from some houses; but we spotted a door that was a bit open, and fired a volley at it, and they never did it again.

We’ve got a goodish trench now, though the fellows who take over from us do their best to spoil it every time.

I can’t think of any funny stories about my bhoys, but they really are amusing, just only in the way they walk about and do everything.

\*

March 7th.

’Twas Der Tag, and the Slithy Huns  
Did Sturm and Sturzel through the Sludge:  
All Bulgous were the Blunderguns,  
And the Bosch Bombs out-bludge!

Don’t you think that is first-rate? It is an admirable description. We’ve all got this stanza on the brain. It comes from a book called ‘Malice in Kulturland’.

Here I am, sitting on Murphy’s bed, writing a letter to you in England! We had a rather slithy time in the trenches this last time, as the enemy’s artillery and snipers showed ‘a certain liveliness’. They also fired rifle-grenades at us, but they went wide. There is a poor old house behind our



lines which gets shelled regularly. My fellows went out one night to get firewood, and came in with a beam about 30 ft. by 3, which they put on a fire. About 5 minutes after, the house fell down, and the Germans cheered, and we joined in. In daylight the place was seen to be flat. It is better like that, as it won't draw fire so much. When we were marching home (to billets!) last night, there was a big drunk Yorkshireman who would not get out of the road and wanted to make trouble, so I shot him into a shell hole full of water, and all was peace and love. The funny part was that he couldn't get out of the water till the platoon had passed, as the only climbable side of the crater was on the road where they were passing. He got out quite sober and rather depressed.

I'm orderly officer to-day, which means all sorts of duties, such as turning out the guard, and inspecting all the institutions like the cook-house and canteen.

Could you send me 40 packets of Woodbines for my platoon, as they all swear by that brand of firework, and aren't happy with anything else? I shall have some money now, C.V. (N.B. 'C' = Cox) and shall be able to pay off my liabilities. 'Spouse you've seen my Gazette? I haven't seen it, but Clarke told me; also that I appear as Barrett (or something between that and Balaam).

A message has just come round giving the nicknames of the different German shells, to be used when reporting officially on their artillery fire. Little Willies, White Hopes, Portmanteaus, Coal-boxes, Black Marias, and Jack Johnsons (these in order of size).

\*

March 8th.

The spring seems to have got here at last, and it is lovely and warm. Everything to correspond, and I am enjoying

myself hard. We've split with B Company, and now run independent company mess, which makes things much cosier. There is a boom in bombs at present, and I'm very busy with my hand-grenade party and the appurtenances thereof. I went and visited a battery of field guns yesterday, very nicely hidden. Our Company sergeant-major has got a commission, and gone to D Company. I'm going to lecture on hand-grenades in half an hour!

\*

March 8th.

I'll give you some description if you like—you always say you like detail for some reason or other. The nature of the billets is of course taboo, though as a matter of fact they know we're here well enough. We have two possible ways of going up to the trenches—one across country, which can only be negotiated on clear nights, and the other through the suburbs of the old town. The country is flat and dull, and the town is also flat and dull, dingy and dismal but solid enough. It has been shelled a good deal, and they take a turn at it every few days. The poor civies panic like blazes, and run about shrieking 'Les obus, les obus!' Sometimes the Huns put shrapnel on to the town, as well as high explosive, and sweep the streets systematically. Of course it is the civies that come in for that, as any soldier knows he must get to cover, while the women and old men run about the squares and don't know what to do. Most of the houses have got cellars, and the cellars have sandbags against the gratings which open on the street. Anyone who can get in a cellar is as near safe as anyone can be within range of the guns, as the shells usually burst as they pass through the first brick wall they meet, and plaster the inside of the room with bits.

They sometimes fire incendiary shells at the town, which throw out streamers of burning phosphorus and celluloid when they burst, and look topping at night! Every now and then they do get a fire going, and I expect they fairly grin over there behind the ridge, two miles away, where their heavy howitzers are, when they see the blaze. The fire brigade is all over 70 years of age; and as the controller of the water supply apparently shuts off the water and locks himself in the cellar at the first whistle, their youthful ardour is not given a fair chance. When they do get going, they flood the adjacent streets in case the cobbles should catch fire. We have got a platoon told off now for fire duty in case of necessity. Last time they shelled the town and killed several women and children, our guns squirted some lyddite into their billets three miles off. The officer in the observation tower tells me that he saw their stretcher bearers busy.

Our trenches run across arable land, mostly turnip fields, and you see ploughs lying about with the share in the furrow, just as they were left. The land is very flat, and there are hedges and fences, quite like England. There is one huge farmhouse where I spent a happy four days being shelled at intervals, and that was where I caught my spy—the one who was ‘*trop français pour cela*’. Most of the country seems to have belonged to this farm. It will want rebuilding after the war, as the outer part is all burnt, and there are no tiles left. This is some hundreds of yards behind the trenches. There are several smaller cottages about, all rather depressed, some with only one wall, others with none at all, but only heaps of bricks. A lot of the work of destruction is due to our men pulling down beams for firewood after the walls have been partially knocked away by shells. There is a road leading up to our bit of trench, and the road has a barricade of sandbags across it.



Our company trench is on the left of the road, and is about 250 yards long, very curly and irregular, but very good, with a high sandbagged parapet, and dug-outs for two to six men well into the ground. In front of the trench the road leads on beyond the barricade till it strikes another road at right angles. There are several poor old houses on this road, which runs about 80 yards in front of our trench and nearly parallel. I have looted most of them, and I have made a trip down a hedge beyond, nearly up to Brother Bosch's wire. I was interested to find that the turnips in their field showed no signs of having been gnawed by hungry Huns! Beyond the road is a grass field, leading up to their wire, and their trenches are in the field beyond that, about 450 yards from ours. Their parapet is very plain to see, showing up at the end of the field; their flat caps show over the edge, especially by the pollard on the right, where they had a low bit sandbagged up one night after we had sniped them there systematically by day.

They keep their loopholes low down in the parapet, and hide them very well, and get awfully sick when we spot them and put bullets through. Looking back from the trenches by day we can see the town in the distance, and when they shell the town we make a sort of front row of the stalls to watch. We hear the shells pass over and guess where they'll go. It is much pleasanter when our guns shell their houses, &c., and we always cheer direct hits. When *they* shell a certain farm behind B Company, about 20 yards from the trench, even the front row of the stalls cheer just to annoy the Germans, and show they aren't doing any damage. B Company lit a big fire one evening to make them think they had set the farm on fire. The Germans shouted 'Hoch!' when it blazed up, and B Company explained, each in his own way, that they had made a mistake! They always cheer our machine guns when they are tuning up in the



evening, and we cheer theirs just out of politeness, or rather, derision, because ours are much faster. The way to make them cross is to shout 'Deutsche Maschinengewehr pom—pom—pom' (the poms very few and far between).

When the Canadians were coming into the trench, a voice was heard some way along: 'And is these the bhoys from the counthry afther comin'? And have they tails to them?'

\*

March 11th.

I am in a sort of house with Young and two platoons, having a nice cushey time till they want us for digging or something. We've got a shell sticking in the wall (about half way through) which has not burst yet, and we're trying to think of a way of getting it out. At present we've had no volunteers for the job! The gunners won't have anything to do with it, and I think it is safer where it is, as nothing will detonate it but a knock, and it is well out of the way. There is awfully good news from Neuve Chapelle and so on, which you've probably got by now. 691 prisoners anyway! I've just been round watching a battery battering the German trenches—at least I watched the guns working, and I knew what it looked like at the other end, as they've been doing lots of it lately—and very nice too. The gunner-sergeant caught a Frenchman the other day signalling from a roof with a helio, and brought him down with a rifle. The residue was shot-at-dawn.

There is a framed and illuminated document on the wall of this room which certifies that the family Delacque was made associate of the Society of Christian Families in August 1899, signed by Jules Duval, parish priest. I wonder where they are now. If they had been in this room when a certain shell came in through the wall, they would have found

it useful. 'Then they asked him for his certificate.' . . .<sup>1</sup> I expect they are refugees somewhere. It's funny how a house that's been absolutely—censored with shell fire, and long deserted, leaves you entirely unmoved till you find something to stimulate your imagination, like a boot scraper or any little thing inside. In most of these places there are enlarged photographs of Monsieur and Madame and the children; in one I found Madame's accounts of the house-keeping. There is nearly always something left to make you think a bit.

It is a topping spring day, and I've been walking round having a lovely sniff at it. There is a bit of mist, or I should have to stay in.

As the men say, 'I have nothing strange to tell you,' by which I mean 'nothing strange that I am allowed to tell you'.

\*

March 13th.

We are seeing life a bit just now, and having a fine time. Our guns are playing Old Harry with the German trenches. There has been some good work done here, and I expect you will hear about it some time soon, but it is too early for me to tell you what is happening. I have been up the whole of the last three nights and days. But I have just been asleep all the morning, and I am feeling as fresh and fit as I have ever felt in my life. In fact, I could be asleep now if I wanted to, but I don't. My men are in the same boat exactly, and they have all had a good sleep, and they are singing and absolutely happy. We're doing a bit of relaxation right away back here, nearly 450 yards from the German trenches, so we can take it a bit easier than before. We've had to keep wide awake until now.

<sup>1</sup> Ignorance in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

There was a fellow crawling down a hedge out beyond our advanced trenches, and when he got up to me I said, 'Who are you?' He said nothing, but crawled on. I banged him on the head with my rifle, thinking he was a Hun. He is all right now though, and a wiser man. It was a good thing I didn't have a bayonet, or I should have stuck him, and he might have gone further and fared worse. As it is, he's got some lump on his head. I think his bump of loquacity will be permanently enlarged.

\*

March 15.

All well and lots to do. Am very fit and happy. Enclosed is shoulder-strap from a friend of mine—133rd Saxon Regiment. He was sniping from a window.

\*

St. Pathrick's Dhay.

P'rhaps I've got time now for a bit of a letter, and can tell you a little of what's been going on to prevent me from writing these days. I may tell you that, even if I *bad* written (which I couldn't), I could not have got a letter any further than my own pocket.

Someone tells me that he's seen in a paper that we've 'advanced 300 yards on an 800 yards front'. That is true.

Some 10 days ago we, together with another battalion (which had easily the worst part to do, and did it very well), took the village of ——,<sup>1</sup> which lies just in front of the main German fire trench, and which they had connected up with saps and entrenched pretty strongly, loopholing the houses, and so on. My share was to advance on the flank of the

<sup>1</sup> Epinette.

village, and 'dig in', under the Devil's own rifle and machine-gun fire, within 200 yards of the Allymans.

The assault was a surprise affair and began at 12 midnight. It was a real surprise for the Dutchman, and most of the houses were unoccupied. We took them all—our crowd having practically no fighting to do—and entrenched round about them. Just before dawn, when we thought they might think of counter-attacking, our guns basted the German trenches with shrapnel at top pressure, and if they ever meant to attack, they decided not to. In the meantime I was digging like blazes, as I knew we should have to hold the unfinished trenches during the following day. When day broke, they began to shell, and that was how we got our casualties in the new lines. In fact, we got it in the neighbourhood of the neck! However, we stuck it all right, and that evening, when twenty Bavarians crawled up with bombs, we shot eighteen and took two prisoners. It was not our show, but a fine bit of vigilance on the part of the battalion concerned.

Ever since, we have hung on to the advanced line, making it better every night, being sniped pretty continuously and being shelled in the intervals. The trenches are now perfectly excellent, and we can defy an attack or any amount of shelling, as we have made dug-outs and all conveniences. But I can assure you that enduring out those days and nights, especially the nights, in little rabbit-scrapes, bringing material up the roads with the searchlight on, putting up wire, and the continuous dig, dig, dig at the parapet, has been work which I am glad is finished. The R.E. have been magnificent, and so have our own men.

I've been in some highly comic situations, but it's no good my trying to tell you about it all, as there has been a sort of new age for everyone, and the change is too big to describe. I am glad to say frankly that I was good enough for my job, which, mark you, was one of the least important.



One night I had a hot corner. I went off with my platoon to a place I'd never been in before—in fact, it had only been occupied the night before that. It was an isolated bit of trench round two sides of a poor old house full of dead Germans. The interesting part about it was a sap from the German trenches running parallel with it within 15 yards! It was pitch dark, and you may guess the process of relief is difficult to execute quietly and without confusion. Of course we were heard, and things hummed till the other people we relieved had moved off and we had taken over.

I got all my men at the parapet with their safety catches over, and sent back urgently asking for a pistol and those flare things you fire up. It arrived about two hours after, and till then we were waiting for things to happen. The Allymans were moving about, 'and things getting up in the dark, and things running off in the grass,' and, thank God, I was perfectly happy, strolling round and trying to stop the men getting wind up. When the 'Very' pistol came, I fired a rocket, and a German jumped into the sap about 50 yards off us! We fired a volley, just to show them we were all right, shouted 'Allyman bully-beef!' to show we weren't frightened (which we *were*), and got to work on the parapet. I wouldn't let a man put his rifle down till I had the pistol, and then we worked one in three, everyone being pretty ready, with an eye on the sap which we couldn't see! The trench was awful—mud, water, dead beasts (blonde and otherwise) all over the place. However, we worked for our lives, and made a very decent place of it by the morning. At dawn we all got in and got under, and lay doggo all day, keeping watch with a periscope; much interested to see what the old sap was like. I only had two men hit in the night while we were working, and just at dawn I got a bullet through my luxuriant locks on the top. I signalled an 'inner' and got down a bit lower in the trench. We all had

to lie down all day, as at one place they could enfilade us. Late the next night, after we had got the parapet a decent height, Clarke and his platoon relieved me. One of his men was shot on the parapet. Clarke and I picked him up, and then I fell over a German (whom we had christened 'Ginger' in the daytime) into a ditch full of water, with the unhappy wounded devil on top, not to mention Clarke. We stopped there, and tied him up, and sent him back to the support trenches without mishap. I sent my platoon on with the platoon-sergeant, and stopped to 'hand over' to Clarke. When I'd told him all I knew, I gave him the 'Very' pistol and my blessing, and went off. I was able to hand over a forty times better trench than I got. By the way, the Allyman fire trench was 150-200 yds. away.

The shoulder-strap that I sent you belonged to a sniper-man, whom I knew I'd got peeping out of a window in the house there about a week before. I went straight to the place and made sure! I could send you a whole dead German, if you would like one, or a box of six at a reduced price. Or is there anything in the horse line we can do for you? We make a speciality in pink pigs: one star three weeks old; two stars four weeks old; three stars five weeks old and upward (i.e. *higher*). There is a well matured sheep and a few very fine goats.

From there I took up a position in a trench of some standing, where we were shelled; thence, after twenty-four hours, to the advanced trenches again, the very trench I'd stood father to. It was lots better, and I put out outposts and worked two in three all night. Next day we were shelled, but lost no one. Worked all night again; shelled next morning. Next night relieved, and came back to old trenches (now support trenches) where I am now. There's a rumour we are going to billets to-night, and I shan't be sorry. We've been up ten days to a fortnight, working almost continuously

and under a bit of a strain. I am absolutely fit in every way, and not even tired since I slept last night. I'm awfully bucked with my nerves. They really are playing the game.

Since we came in, I've been out three times to visit the people who relieved us.

Young and Murphy are all right, but two of my best friends are dead on me, besides several I knew very well. That is the only thing that will make a man fight and stick it. Now I can carry on for ever with this, and mean to.

We spent St. Pathrick's Day (I'm writing on the 19th) singing 'A Nation Once Again', firing volleys, shouting rude remarks, and having a cheery time. All this in the advanced trenches. We were shelled promptly, and cheered every shell. They were 77 mm. shrapnel—'little Willies'—from a gun on our left flank, which I got our gunners to try and knock out. But little Willie is still there.

Thank you awfully for the shamrock. I am sending you a bit which has been with me through some of these funny places, given me by Sergeant O'Connor on the 15th.

The bad part is over. We've got an excellent connected fire trench, and as the Allymans have not attacked yet, they will never get near us now. They could have wiped us up the first night. Now we've got wire and 'all completed'. I went out with a party and stole some German chevaux-de-frise, which we put in front of our own advanced trench, the place where the sap is; we simply had to have something, and there was none anywhere else to be had. They must have been sick in the morning.

We're much pleased with ourselves, especially me! Our crisis is dead and gone, and as we stand we are simply entrenched some 300 yards nearer than before, with no more suspense or need for anxiety than in the old peaceful days in the now support trenches.



I've got a very bald lance-corporal, and when a German aeroplane was passing low over us, a comic man called Taaffe shouted, 'Put yer haat on, Pather'—(he's called *Peter the Painter*)—'she'll be takin' the range on yez.' When there was a big fire one night, I shouted down, 'Keep that light down there, Bent, or they'll break that heliograph of yours.' He replied in a perfect imitation of the C.O. 'Signallar, signallar, will you take this message!' Then he started ducking his head spasmodically; you can't think how funny it was.

I had a conversation with a German the other morning. I began just at dawn: 'Guten Morgen, Allyman,' and we soon got going. I told him about the Kaiser, and he said we were all sorts of things I didn't know the English for, and also one thing which is a favourite appellative among the lower orders of English society, which he was awfully pleased with. I shouted 'Waiter!' and one sportsman said 'Coming, sir, coming, sir!'

I'll tell you some more some other time, but I shall never be able to tell you anything like all about this business. In every moment of the day there was something amusing, or at any rate peculiar. I am very happy and extraordinarily well, always hungry, and my nerves really very good.

\*

March 19th.

How are you going on? I'm curled up in a blanket in a dug-out, just having finished lunch. It is very cold to-day, snowing.

\*

March 21st.

Here we are in billets. Had a working party out last night, but it was all very pleasant, as there was a nice little moon.



We've got some wopping big guns round about here now, and they make a frightful noise at unseasonable hours. Everything is going toppingly.

\*

March 22nd.

In billets—been having a bomb-throwing séance, which was a great success. Weather is lovely and warm and everyone is cheerful. There's some awful big guns making things hilarious for the Bosches from just close here.

\*

March 24th.

All well and plenty to do. Thank you so much for sound-deadeners. I've some use for them here. My goodness, there is a row! We are still in billets, doing working parties at night and hand-grenades and rifle-grenades, &c., by day. I have just been lecturing the N.C.O.s of my platoon on their duties in attack, &c. I also had my men out and gave them rapid loading practice. They are very good. The rifle-grenade is a topping little machine with a range of about 200.

A captain of the ——s, whom I know well and like even better, went on a patrol a long way in front the other night. The next morning a German shouted across, 'Leinsters, we have buried your comrade.' You will notice that the fellow who shouted across was not well informed on the regiment of the man they'd shot, so it was just an ordinary infantryman, who was not concerned in the business, and very likely saved the lives of a search-party. I never again want to hear a journalist shrieking that they never play the game.

Everything is absolutely normal now in the trenches, as the new line is connected and consolidated. The dug-outs we have made are better than any I've ever seen before. The

length of trench I dug and finished is the best in the battalion line, in the judgment of Murphy and the C.O.!

We had one comic episode in it, when a *Little Willie* high explosive came in through the parapet and knocked about ten men off their legs without injuring anyone. I got a sandbag full in the tummy, and went flying into a puddle with all the wind knocked out of me. I was very glad to find no one hurt; at first I thought the whole section was done in, as rifles and equipment flew in the air. Five minutes after, that section had repaired the gap! The Allymans are making extensive use of *Little Willie* now-a-days. He is a beast of a little 77 and deals in H.E. as well as shrapnel. The shells come in awfully quick and with a peculiar whiz, which does not give sufficient notice of their coming. By the way, you said you found a note I wrote to a gunner officer on the back of a letter. It must be a message I didn't send as I found the officer himself. It was with reference to this same gun, which had got on our flank, and was sweeping the trenches with shrapnel. I got a spent bullet behind, right inside my dug-out, and it stung! (The sequel was that our field guns started firing like mad, and silenced *Little Willie* for the time.) I'm very busy, and I must get on with all sorts of things, so good-bye.

\*

March 24th.

Everything going on very well. We had some Bosch Bombs here yesterday, one came into the quarter-master-sergeant's store and made an awful mess; but the Q.M.S. in question was fortunately just outside, and knocked flat by the door, which was blown off its hinges! He was not hurt at all, nor was anyone else. They were using a 4.5 shrapnel, which burst on percussion. Our guns replied with 4.7 calibre shells of the same type, and I hope we did more damage.

I had a party of ten territorial sergeants yesterday to teach hand-grenades to, and I did with great success. They were pretty *intelligent*! (do you remember, that is what French called the Artists?) The old town here is bucking up a bit, and we can get almost anything we want, especially at a 'Burberry' shop, which is quite like an English stores on a small scale, but murderously expensive.

I'm thinking of going into the 'bally 'ole' this afternoon, but I've got a lot of odd jobs to attend to, so I must wash out now. By the way, the electric batteries are very nice. I will really say if I want anything.

\*

March 25th.

All well. However, it rains all the time and there is an awful lot of mud. Had a digging party last night. They sprayed a few shells about yesterday but did no damage worth speaking of. Don't imagine I was in the hard fighting the other day, because our show was comparatively tame and quite distinct. It consisted of taking up a new line within 150-200 yards of the Allymans, and was carried out without any serious fighting, but with plenty of bullets and shells to amuse us. We're happy now, especially me.

\*

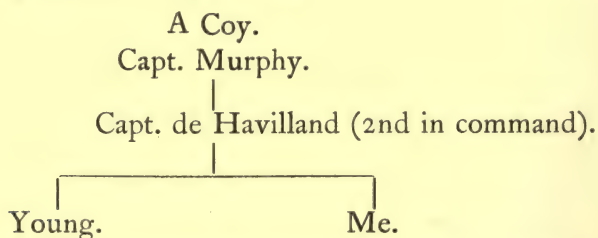
March 27th.

A lovely spring day and everything to match. In rather a nice little bit of trench, which we've made pretty good. I just spotted two Allymans wheeling a hand-cart about 1500 yards away behind their lines. Opened a rapid fire on my own, and they fairly bolted, leaving the cart! This is very nice and cushey.

\*

March 27th.

Here we are—second day in the thrinches, on the right of the battalion line, in pretty decent positions. There's heaps of rats here, and I got a good one with my revolver last night. We are having wonderful moonlight and frost by night, and lovely sunshiny days, with aeroplanes all over the place being shelled by their respective enemies. It is a good thing to watch. The German anti-aircraft guns have suddenly got very good in an uncanny way, but they are very seldom 'on', only always there or thereabouts. I wouldn't go up in an aeroplane over shrapnel for a lot! Young and I are in a dug-out together. By the way, perhaps you're wrong with the family tree nowadays. It goes



You see we're short of subs, the right number being four per company.

Ong snipes a good deal nowadays, and as I write it is crack-crack-crack and bang-bang-bang from them and us. However, I've had no one hit this turn in the trenches; their sniping is below the average. This morning a stove chimney in their trench was smoking hard, and I fired at it till the smoke came out all down the side, and finally it leant over and collapsed. It can't have been more than 6 inches wide, and the range is about 450.

Everything is very good here and everyone is pleased. I'm tremendously fit and quite happy.



March 28th.

Enclosed is rayther comic souvenir. When the Post Corporal was giving me a parcel, a half-spent bullet hit plop in the middle of it. The said bullet proved on examination to have splintered the bulls-eyes, gone through the chocolates, and finally stuck in a bit of Turkish Delight which I send you *exactly* as I took it out of the packet. It's one of the funniest freak bullets I've ever seen or heard of.

P.S. The Post Corporal has just discovered that the bullet hit him in the breast pocket, tore across his pay-book, and the front of his tunic and his sleeve, before it plopped into my parcel, so it is what you would call *some* bullet!

\*

March 29th.

All is peace and love! We shelled them a bit this morning. When they were shelling one of our 'planes, a shrapnel bullet wounded our trench dog, but I think he'll get over it pretty quickly. Everything is nice and peaceful, and there is not too much work to be done. Tried to flash a looking-glass in Fritz's face, but he got fed up and fired at it.

\*

March 29th.

Thank you very much for your letter, which was a dear letter and made me think of you. It is nice to think of you thinking of me.

Everything goes very well here. The days are bright and warm, and the nights bright and cold, so everyone is satisfied. We are having a very peaceful time just now, as they have not shelled us, and the sniping is mostly done by us, though goodness knows there is never much to shoot at,

except loopholes, tin chimneys, and an occasional flat cap, which disappears as soon as one sees it.

Trench warfare in the spring is really very nice—barring the smells, which begin to get offensive. We've got lots of quicklime now, and are disposing of heaps of odd bodies ; so the smells are even now diminishing. It is lovely sitting in the sun and listening to the cock-chaffinches and yellow-hammers tuning up, and expanding in the *aura* which has come straight from Burnt Hill. There's nothing like Spring air to take you away and back. Even in this hole in a turnip-field we are conscious of the *largior aether*, which is as broad as from here to England at least, and as deep as all past years, made warm with old happiness, and all alive with fancies that come in and laugh like the ghosts of little kiddies that keep on playing though no one takes any notice.

Then we go back to the trenches. We have a good line now. The parapet is high, perhaps five feet above the ground level, built of sandbags and banked up behind with earth, four feet thick at the top and anything over ten at the bottom. You see, they are pretty powerful earthworks really ; and sometimes a light shell bursting on the bottom of the slope does not get through. But of course direct hits high up blow a chunk right away. No parapet is ever meant to stand against shell fire ; the only thing is to throw up tons of earth in front and hope that it will not be a direct hit, which is a fairly rare thing, T.G. !

Can you imagine millions and millions of sandbags built up like bricks in regular lines : a boarded floor : little dug-outs behind, covered with as much loose earth as possible : a step to stand on for firing over the parapet : iron loophole plates let into the sandbags with holes for sniping through ? The scenery is pretty consistent—farms laid out in brick-heaps, with perhaps two walls standing : long lines of tall trees : big fields of turnips, grass meadows and gardens ; all

alike cut through by the serpentine brown lines of fire-trench, communication-trench, sap, support-trench, and so on, for miles. There are lots of hedges, and the ditches are full of water, which is a pity, as they are often the only places to get into. There's the big farm—in the middle of it a big pond surrounded by barns &c. in a square. The walls are all blown in, and the roofs have been stripped of beams by T. Atkins looking for wood for his fire. The straw has been taken by the same gentleman for his dug-out. The ploughs and things lie about, with the share in the furrow, except where they've been used for obstacles. Dead cattle all over the place.

The world is waking up a bit. All the winter it was dead and ghastly about here. It is almost genial now. When the grass and leaves are out it will be much more pleasant sitting about in holes and killing one another. The present phase of the campaign is very much to my taste. I am very well and happy, like my work, and feel I can do it all right.

\*

### BILLETS!

(Now are you happy?)

April 1st.

I hardly dared to go and inspect my platoon this morning before twelve, I was so afraid they'd try and be funny at my expense. However, I did it, and nothing happened.

We were relieved last night by the usual crowd, and came back without anything happening. These last seven days up have been lovely. We were only shelled once, and it was beautifully warm. There was not too much to do, and the Allymans were fairly docile. I shot three rats with my automatic pistol. We've acquired a fox terrier, who has been christened Sandbag by the Company. He was slightly

wounded by a bit of aeroplane shrapnel, but he is going on all right.

We've just heard that the order about cameras is washed out, so can I have mine back please?

Do you remember I told you that my first night here I caught a man asleep on post? He got off all right with a term of field punishment. He was a nice little chap; and now he is dead, caught by the maxim while putting out wire.

\*

April 2nd.

Yesterday afternoon all A Company's officers were out except me, when the adjutant came round, and I constituted myself O.C.Coy. 'What's the next platoon for a dirty job?' sez 'e. There was a platoon and a half to go away to some place two miles to the south and piquet a road. I detailed my platoon and half No. 3, talked it over with the Company sergeant-major, and went off on a signaller's bike to try and find the place with a map. Found the place (there were two, as it turned out) in most inaccessible positions across country. Inspected them and talked to the officer in charge, found out all about them, and raced back to the billets—still no sign of the captain. Marched off the platoon and a half, met Murphy and explained. Posted them all in their positions in strange buildings—there was lots to arrange about—and here I am, a few hundred yards behind the trenches of an excellent regiment, in a very nice big building, though rather full of shell-holes, with Hudson and every convenience. Don't know how long I'm for it.

By the way, when I rode up to reconnoitre, I was one cross-road out on the map, and went buzzing on down the road till one of our guns fired behind me, and the shell burst some 300 yards in front of me—and behold! there were the



German trenches! I about-turned then and came back, riding zig-zag in case anyone tried to be funny, but no one shot at me at all.

Last night I went off to find where neighbouring piquets were. Found a farm, and walked in, expecting to see men billeted as garrison, but when I opened the door, there sat about three majors and a colonel, besides countless captains. I'd butted into a battalion H.Q., and very cushey it was too! I girded up my loins to flee, but they called me back, and gave me butter in a lordly dish, and things like that. They were awfully amused, and rather pleased at my pegging off to discover who lived next door. They are about half a mile from here 'cross country. Felt I'd struck oil there. Finally, I tore myself away and wandered back to my flock. I had two sections isolated in a farm some thousand yards off, and I visited them frequently in the night. The sniping across the open country was most exhilarating.

It is a lovely day to-day, and I'm feeling awfully bucked with life. We have to sit tight during the day so as not to be seen. We've got magnificent cellars to go to if they shell us, so there is nothing lacking to make life pleasant. It's awful fun being on your own in places like this, though I've got some fleas or something from an old mattress I slept on, and I have to keep getting up and rubbing my back on the wall like a pig! My time in billets was not prolonged, but I'm just as comfy here, and don't mind how long I stay. The Spring is lovely to-day, and the birds are singing hard. Have you heard the cuckoo yet? I haven't. Don't know when I shall get the chance to post this. The Germans are bombing our trenches with a trench mortar that makes an awful noise. We've got some like that too now, and rifle grenades, and all sorts of charming toys. There is a farmer man here who, as Sergt. O'Brien tells me, 'has had five cows killed on him by shells'. Aren't you sorry for him?

April 4th.

Here we are again! I got relieved on the night of the 2nd by Farrell, and marched back to the billet at the head of my army. It took me nearly an hour to 'hand over', as there was such a lot I had to show him. When I got here, I reported 'the relief complete' to Bullen, and went across to our quarters. Found officers of A and B Companies having a combined blind. I was greeted with, 'Oooo! here's Barnett back from the Front!' We had a glorious evening, as we've made a piano, and Daly plays toppingly; and we sang 'to beat Hell,' as Andrews used to say.

Yesterday was pretty uneventful, though I had a lot to do—Company work. At 5 p.m. my term as Orderly Officer began. At 5 the new guard has to be mounted—a long and intricate ceremony, which I got through quite all right, though I was so afraid of the sergeant-major in case I did anything wrong! At 8.30 is Staff Parade, when all the Company sergeant-majors give in absentee reports. That was all right. At 11 I turned out and inspected the guards. One of the sergeants in charge was dhrunk! Took the necessary steps, put him under arrest, went and got another sergeant to take charge, &c. It was a long but most amusing business, though it was dark as a coalhole and raining cats and dogs. This morning (Easter Sunday) I inspected the guards again, also the canteen and cook-house. Visited the soldiers-under-arrest, as they are called in Army Orders, and asked for complaints. Private Sherry wanted clean under-clothes! Of course I knew he'd sold them for drink, so I told him to try the pawnbrokers. Loud cheers from the guard and the other prisoners. Collapse of Private Sherry. Went and fitted up some fuses for the hand-grenades. Came in and began writing to you! Forgot to say we went a route march yesterday for about 7 miles, and it was very hot work, though it managed to rain as well.

April 5th.

We are still in billets having a pretty easy time of it, but the weather has changed and it's raining hard. Had dinner with B Company last night, and very nice it was! We had a concert afterwards.

Yesterday Bullen inspected the Company. He seemed pretty resigned to its looking like that. Must say it does look rather comic, very war-worn and scrubby, in uniforms that look as if they had been buried for some time. Anyway they aren't downhearted hardly at all.

This morning I've been giving evidence in the case of Sergt. — charged with being drunk in charge of the quarter guard.

'Lance-Corporal Reilly.'

'Sirr! At elivin fhurty-foive on the nhoight of te t'ird of April I was passin' by the gyardroom an' te orderly officer called me up to look at the sergint. He was dhrunk.'

'Corporal Keenan.'

'Sirr! At twilve o'clock on te noight of te t'ird of April, as I was afther postin' te sintries, Oi saw te orderly officer had the gyard turned out. Oi siz, 'Gyard all pres'nt 'n c'rect, sirr.' Siz 'e, 'An fwere's t' sergint?' 'Inside he is,' siz I, and wid that in Oi wint and there he was lyin' on the bed of him. 'Git up,' siz I, 'sergint; te orderly officer is afther turnin' out the gyard on yez.' Thin te officer came in. 'Oi have the gyard turned out,' siz he, and wid that he shook the sergint and rolled him off the bed. He got up and wint to the door.'

'Was he drunk?'

'He was dazed, sirr, like as afther been woke up out of the sleep.'

And so on.

When I was on that job I had the other day with my platoon, a comic man I've got, called Patrick Taaffe, said,

‘And us t’hurned out of bhillets askin’ t’Howly Mother wis we goin’ to an attack, an’ widout rations an’ all, and we t’ought ye wud not be comin’ wid us, sirr, from ye not bein’ there, and shure what wud we do without our Pontoon Officer?’

\*

Trenches,  
April 7th.

Back to the trenches again, sergint! Came up last night and relieved the usual crowd in the advanced trenches, near the place I was at before, where the dead Allymans were. It is considerably improved since I was here last; the parapet is well built up and there are decent dug-outs; moreover, some of the personnel is buried.

They sniped a lot last night, and dropped trench-mortar bombs about on my trench, but without hitting anyone. They make an awful noise, and seem to come from nowhere, as you can’t hear them coming as you can shells. The trenches are rather wet, as we’ve had some days’ rain, but the dug-out the pioneers have built for the officers is a wonderful thing. I can nearly stand up in it, and it is about ten feet by eight, all boarded inside, with a real door which works on real hinges.

Clarke was hit in the big toe last night! He has gone to the field ambulance for a few days, but he’s not bad at all.

Thank you very much for the *Pauline*. I see they’ve been looting my unpublished works again.

We had a divisional horse-show yesterday in the town, and altogether we scooped three firsts and a tied first. We led easily; isn’t that topping?

It has cleared up now, and is a nice mild day, with a lark singing.

I’m very happy and well and hope you are too.



April 8th.

Everything is very nice here. They've been bombing us with a great trench-mortar, and also squirting rifle grenades, but we reply in kind. I got a rifle grenade smack into their trench this morning. One of their trench-mortar bombs burst some three yards off me, and sent me flying on my face with the concussion thereof, which is really some bump! I was not hurt in the least, which shows what poor things they are.

We are perhaps going back to the second line to-night, but it is not quite fixed yet, as poor old Daly is seedy and may not be able to relieve us. The weather is beastly and stormy besides being cold, but we don't do badly at all. I feel that no weather would make any difference to me now, as I've settled right down to it.

Went out last night with de Havilland and filled in a German sap, besides festooning it with barbed wire. Also stole the footboards they'd put down. I'm afraid they'll be rather sick about it. They were peacefully working, about 50 yards from us, blissfully unconscious that we were spoiling all their earlier efforts. Just heard that we do go back to supports to-night, otherwise I was going to do a record throw with a hand-grenade into a listening post I know of. As it is, I shan't, so don't get excited.

\*

April 9th.

Came back last night to support trenches (the old fire trench) where we can rest and get clean a bit. I had a fine bushy beard, and was inches deep in mud. Now I've emerged a little way. This morning one of our trench-mortars blew up, but did no damage, as we always light the fuse and get behind something till she's gone off. The

Allymans fired four bombs at us last night, of which three did not burst, and all went right behind the trench. *Little Willie* has been active this morning, squirting shells at a village behind us. He tried to shell us yesterday, but they all burst behind our front line. Seems to me they are getting worse in artillery. The only thing they beat us at is anti-aircraft guns, which are really good, though they very seldom actually knock out our aeroplanes. We were expecting an attack the other night, but it didn't come. The excitement was all caused by a German relief taking up the trenches opposite. It is beautifully peaceful in here now, and it is a glorious spring day. There are heaps of birds about, and they are all singing like mad.

Poor old Daly is very seedy, and is going to the base, I think. Perhaps he'll get some sick leave! I was never fitter in my life, worse luck! Moreover, I shot an Allyman yesterday; at least, he went down so quick that his cap fell off, so I think I shall soon be back!

We've got some 15 inch guns about. The first shot they had was at an observation tower on a hill. They missed it. But when they had relaid the gun, and looked for the target again, they found the hill had gone. This is vouched for by the gunners, of course! My men have just found one of the 'dud' trench-mortar bombs. It is a great round thing, as big as a decent sized melon. I'm not surprised it knocked me over when it burst, as it weighs about 50 lbs. Ours are cylindrical, and not quite as big, but very useful withal. You see them flying through the air till they fall plump into the Allyman trench, and burst almost immediately with a crash and the loud singing of flying bits.

Heard from Kenneth somewhere in the Mediterranean. Seemed to think he was for the Dardanelles. He's a full-blown M.-G. officer!

Billets,  
April 11th.

Came back to billets last night without any mix-ups. Lost a good man this time, Farrell of B Company, who was badly hit, poor old dear. By the way, Williams, the captain I worked with, has gone out. He got pneumonia. We've got three new officers, one in A, who is none other than the mighty Will, Scotch International.

There's a boom in bombs just now. The Allymans have got some fine trench-mortars, and so have we. I deal in rifle grenades. The other night I was feeling fed-up because Farrell was hit, and I'd fallen into a ditch full of water, so I went and got a young hand-grenade, and crawled up a German sap. I listened to them working for some time, then I got up and threw the hand-grenade into the scrum as far as I could judge. Its burst was simply tremendous, and the whole country seemed full of Allymans running like rabbits for their trench. I lay in the sap for a bit, and then went home. Found the advanced post chuckling in smothered tones. You should have heard the beggars run! It was like rats in Simonds' pig-styes when the three ferrets are in.

\*

April 15th.

Still in billets, but living a strenuous life with all sorts of parades. I've got to dig to-night too. The summer is here now and it is a great improvement. This morning I was watching some starlings feeding on the ground, and wondering whether I would throw something at them. I decided not to, and suddenly a sparrow-hawk swooped down and got one. So it would have been kinder if I'd bunged a stone at them! I appropriated the omen, anyway. Went and had cockshies with hand-grenades at an Allyman made of three

sandbags with a tin pot on the top; knocked the stuffing out of him. Did some machine-gun shooting yesterday. It is a good game, and I found I remembered quite a lot. Talking of M.-G's I wonder how Kenneth is doing with his little gun-teams on the plains of Dardanus?

Please could you send me a couple of yards of the thickest elastic you can get, the stuff they use for punch-balls? It is going to revolutionise modern methods of warfare in the form of a trench-mortar of the 'ballista' type. A man called Pearman (just come to B Company from the H.A.C.) and I have thought out the details of this weapon. Some catty! Gott strafe England!

\*

Château-du-goût, France,  
19th April.

Here we are in the trenches again—in support at present. We came up last night quite comfortably without casualties.

I'm afraid I've not made it clear what parcels I've had. I got the cake some time ago. Can't you trace it in my letters? Also the Easter eggs. I've had one parcel of pants, and the troops are now inside them. Talking of the cake, she was a huge success, and the chickens off the top are gracing the walls of the château in which I'm writing. In fact, they are preventing the draught from penetrating through a hole in the sand-bags. Not that it is cold; in fact, it is extremely hot, and very nice indeed altogether. There's a mouse running about in the straw! Can't afford a revolver cartridge for him, but I'm watching for a chance of a bayonet charge. I've made an imitation periscope by sticking a bit of silver paper on a board with candle-grease. This displayed over the parapet is guaranteed to draw sniping fire. In fact, they've spoilt one already.



There's been the devil's own battle going on some miles off. So far we've had awfully good news. Should think there'll be something about it in the papers in a month's time—six months after that will be the casualty lists.

We've had a new sort of hand-grenade issued. I've had to teach it to a party of battalion grenadiers. The new grenade is a real daisy. She fairly bursts! She's more powerful than the other kind, and can be thrown 50 or 60 yards with ease. Good news of Farrell, he'll probably get over it all right. Also of Daly, who is coming back pretty soon. Also of me, who is doing very nicely, thank you, and very fit.

The Allymans have fired about fifty shells to-day without hitting anyone. Are we downhearted?

This is lovely. The birds are singing away, and someone is snoring in the next dug-out but two! What more could man desire?

Interesting discovery: *Little Willie* 77 mm. shell is just the calibre of an average whiskey bottle.

A friend of mine, I hear, has got an attack of frightfulness, i.e. German measles.

\*

April 20th.

All well and cheery. It's a lovely day and the sun is shining hard, and the Allymans are shelling our aeroplanes like blazes; in fact, there is nothing more we could want to complete our appreciation of life.

We are having a quiet time to-day, without any frightfulness for a change, as there has been a good deal going about. We caught the Allymans out last night with a magnesium light, and gave them a beastly time. The residue got into their trenches and fairly gibbered with excitement. They

kept shouting all sorts of curses and rude remarks and firing wildly. They always fire high in the night—our fellows don't so much now. There go the anti-aircraft guns again. There is one of our chaps who keeps going out a little way and coming back in clouds of shrapnel smoke—apparently for amusement. When they are bursting the shells right above us, it is just as well to get under cover, as the air simply buzzes with bits of shell and bullets, all falling from a good height, and liable to give you a good clout, though the bullets would probably not wound you badly.

By the way, I'm nearly twenty!

There was a single brick sticking up on top of a wall of a farm some 600 yards off. Eighth shot I knocked it off, and an Allyman shouted, 'Good shot, English.'

\*

April 20th.

I'm doing very well, in spite of a good deal of frightfulness. I throw hand-grenades, thou shootest rifle-grenades, he fires trench-mortars, we snipe, you traverse a machine-gun, they shell the trenches. In fact, there is a lot of sound and fury, though it all comes to very little. I had a working party out last night, but no one was hit, except one old codger who was smitten behind by a German magnesium light (which they fire from a pistol) and it singed them nearly through! However, they did not see us. Isn't it sickening about the camera? He's got to go, though I don't want to lose him.

Found an Allyman rifle the other day, and hunted up some ammunition in one of their old saps. Spent a cheery time showing them what it is like for us. Caused a lot of amusement by dancing a little jig all by myself with the Allyman rifle, and singing a hymn of hate about 'Allyman,

Allyman, bom-bom bully-beef'. Didn't know there was a crowd watching.

Enclosed is a bit of Little Willie that went through my belt and then stopped.

P.S. It's true about the football.<sup>1</sup>

\*

April 25th.

I'm writing from billets, so that's all right, isn't it? Had a pretty hectic time these last three days, when we were in the front trenches.

We went up without a hitch and settled down comfortably; but about ten in the evening, as we were carousing in the dug-out, a five-inch shell came puffing along and burst with such a bash that the lamp went out. So did we. Everything was correct. The sentries all had their buttons polished and pipe-clay on their helmets, so we told them to 'stand easy' and went back. Boom-screoooo-bang—out went the light. This went on for about a quarter of an hour, and then they stopped.

They shot all sorts of things at us during the next two days—everything they had, I should think. The British losses, however, were small. Young and I did our best. We would be sitting in the dug-out when wish-bang and a rifle grenade lit on the roof. Great indignation felt by the occupants. 'Let's go and be frightful!' Young gets out the trench-mortar and I make a dash for the rifle grenades. Then we make ourselves unpopular. His weapon is really better than mine, but it takes a long time to load. We have both got a good many smack into the trench, and they fairly make the sausage fly! They shelled us every day with *White Hopes* and *Little Willies*, but did very little damage.

<sup>1</sup> Dropped by an English airman on April 1st and taken to be a bomb.

The only drawback is that they've got us clean enfiladed and don't let us forget it. As long as we sit tight there is no reason why anyone should be hit at all, as we've got a good trench with traverses (which are high banks at right angles to the trench line).

Yesterday was a really comic show. Our guns began hammering the Allyman wire at a place where they were sapping. Then we had orders to open fire to show we were there, so we did. Then the Allyman got livery and opened on us with two batteries of field guns and a six-inch howitzer. We just sat there and pretended we didn't mind. It was good exercise dashing round to see how the platoon was getting on. I've never gone so fast in my life, and that with my head between my knees, getting into corners at intervals while it blew over. Have I ever mentioned little Taaffe to you? He was killed. No one else was touched. For a long time it was nothing but '77' shrapnel. Then the old howitzer grumbled teutonicly some miles away, and we heard the souvenir coming. It finished with a sprint, as all shells seem to, and when it burst we were covered with black smuts and earth, and it sang the gentle refrain of the *Black Maria*, which still sounds in the back of my head. The pathetic part was that I tried to find the sound-deadeners when I heard the big gun, and couldn't, so I stuck two fingers and a sand-bag into each ear. Luckily it was some fifteen yards off the trench, and they only sent two, or someone might have got nervous, as they were the real old-fashioned chimney-on-fire type of pea-shooter ammunition, that sounds like a young thunder-clap.

This entertainment lasted an hour and a half, and then we blew a whistle and they stopped. Then we cleared up the mess and went and had tea. We relieved that night. When I'd handed over and I was taking my platoon back, the swine began shelling the road I was going home by.



I thought it wasn't good enough, so I about turned and made for the other road. We went down it watching the shells burst on the road we'd left, and chuckling. We got out of rifle range, and as everything was quiet, closed up into fours. When we'd done that, a shell burst just short of us! 'Front section advance, remainder lie down.' When the first section had doubled about forty yards, I sent on the next, and so on. I shouldn't have thought those old dears could have gone so fast! When the last section had got going, I saw a flash a mile or so off, and made them all get down. *Little Willie* burst slap on us that time, but never hit a man. Then we went on. We had one more on us and among us, and after that they were behind us. I wish I'd taken the time of that march. I bet it was a record. We got home all correct, having lost only two men all the six days.

When we got back, Julius Cæsar harangued the legions. 'Ye pestilential sons of sin,' sez he, 'the Ginral's afther congratulatin' A Company on not gittin' th' wind up. I'm hopin' ye git a bit of rest,' sez he, 'but ye don't deserve it, ye gibberin' Cork monkeys,' sezee; 'Platune,' sezee, 'roight turn, dismiss,' sez he.

All that was pretty frightful, but it was nothing to Church Parade. As Murphy was rather done up, I rashly said I'd parade the Company at 7.45 this morning. It was all right till we got there, and then I found we were late! The priest was preaching 'to beat Hell' when we rolled in, and he stopped short and watched 246 Irishmen file into his church. I was expecting to be denounced as an infidel 'ex cathedra', or excommunicated, or exorcised, or excoriated, or X-rayed, or something awful. However, he didn't seem to notice anything funny about me, and I might have been a 'good Carthlick' for all he knew. I watched Patsey Flannigan carefully so as to know when to stand up, when to

stand on my head, and when to stand drinks, and it went off all right, though I had awful wind up. Then we marched back.

We had two cadets from the School of Instruction attached to us! Isn't that funny? Neither of them were Artists, however, though they had both known some at G.H.Q. We gave 'em their money's worth yesterday, anyway, and they went away very white and thoughtful! I should like to see the reports they write on their 'time up'.

The weather has been glorious, and it was top-hole in the intervals between the frightfulness. A sparrow sat on a tree between us and the Allymans, about 50 yards off, and I bagged him. Perhaps I got a German A.S.C. man counting sausages in the middle of the road from Berlin to Düsseldorf. Every little helps to feed the Kaiser's army, but perhaps the A.S.C. men are kept for the officers' mess.

Aeroplanes have been dropping bombs on the town while we've been out, and have killed a lot of little kids and a few horses. There is a little grave about 2 ft. by 3 in the middle of a bust-up farm, and on the cross there is this: 'Here lies Tim, a little brown dog, killed by a shell during the bombardment of this house by the Germans on April 23, 1915. R.I.P.' That was the end of our mascot. He went out of the trench into the farm to see why the bricks kept jumping about. He did his bit all right. The R.B's had a kitten, but she was shot by a sniper while walking on the parapet with her tail straight up in the air. Hermann the German must have been riled by pussy reminding him of his poor chance of going that way when the R.B's lay him out. Hope they have by now. Please send a bullet-proof tortoise.

You seem to have whacked up the ammunition supply at home! There appears to be heaps of old iron in the limbers now, and it is awfully good stuff, to judge from a distance by its results. There is a battery occupied in trying to knock out the *White Hope* that enfilades us. More

power to the howitzers! That *White Hope* shell is rather a brute. She takes about two seconds from the report of the gun to get to you, and when she bursts she goes an almighty crump with an enormous thick eddying cloud of whitey-yellow smoke. She bursts black too sometimes. They say she's a 4'5 or something on those lines.

Daly has come back as large as life, but Broad was hit through the shoulder the other day. He was splendid. 'Where are the stretcher bearers?' he asked casually, and went to look for them. 'Is someone hit?' 'Yes.' I think he's all right, but it is not a particularly nice one. Clarke, I believe, has gone home.

We *shall* get a good time in billets. I'm going to the Follies this afternoon. Altogether I'm awfully happy and well—really, 'wish I may die' if I'm not! You can't imagine how little I'm worried by shells and things nowadays. I'm really living and really liking every moment of it.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

April 26th.

Thank you most awfully for your many cheering letters. I'm doing very well and enjoying myself any amount. The weather is glorious, and we've got swallows and the best of the English birds here in force, though we don't see many round about the trenches.

Perhaps you'll see Clarke some time; he got hit in the foot. The other Artist who came here with me got a bullet through the shoulder, and he's gone home.

Three little Artists looking at the view  
One got it in the foot and then there were two.

Two little Artists shooting at a Hun  
One got it in the chest and then there was one.

One little Artist . . . feeling very scared  
Was told he'd have to lead a charge . . . but peace was declared.

As G.K.C. says :—

There's a good deal to be said  
For being dead, . . .

but I must say I'd rather be in England catching crows, and learning to fish. I hope things are well with the 'throuts'. Please tell me all about your fishing.

\*

B. E. F.,  
April 27th.

I am sending back the dear little camera ; but on the other hand I've seen the negatives of those I took with the Ensign, and they're not so dusty. I'm getting them imprimés ; I don't know if I shall be able to send any back to you, but I'll try.

Farrell is apparently going on all right, but the doctors don't know why he isn't dead. He is not the sort to put himself out to follow convention in this or anything else.

We've had a splendid time so far in billets, with a good noisy concert every evening. Went to the Follies yesterday, and met a chap I knew at school called Fraser. He is a captain now.

We had a couple of hours' company drill and all the funny old stunts this morning. The men are really very good still. The funny part was that all the subalterns' watches were a quarter of an hour slow, and the company was paraded (not to mention the captain) when we four came rolling along ! There was a loud explosion, and we marched off our platoon feeling rather shaken (chiefly with suppressed mirth) but not a bit repentant, though we depressed our tails artificially.

This is a quotation from our Army Corps Summary of Information : 'The German wireless news of last night states that west of —— the English attempts to attack were nipped



in the bud. This is rather amusing, as hot fire was opened on the night in question, from the right of our line, with the object of making the Germans believe we were about to attack.' This refers to our show the other day that I told you about, when we had orders to fire hard, and got shelled for our pains. The only unit that got nipped in the bud was poor old Paddy Taaffe. I enclose the deductions made by Young in the manner of Hilaire Belloc from that little contretemps.

I am so extraordinarily bucked with life now that I am always hopping downstairs on one leg or doing some silly thing like that purely from joie de vivre.

Extract from *Land and Water*. April 1st, 1915.

'Reckoning that the cost of each of their smaller shells is approximately £5, and that each of their medium sized ones costs about £10, and each of their large shells, with black smoke, about £15, I should say on a rough calculation that Germany spent about £450 on my bit of a trench alone in the course of half an hour. I have intentionally under-estimated the cost of the shells, and omitted in the calculation (a) the 20 per cent. that failed to burst; (b) the wear and tear of the guns engaged. Considering that £450 is an extremely low estimate and that the total damage done was one man's head off and six sandbags ruined for life, we get the extraordinary conclusion that, were this performance to be continued daily throughout the British front, the German Empire would be ruined financially in about four days, with a total loss—allowing 5 per cent. for shattered nerves, and 10 per cent. for men wounded by splinters—of roughly 500 men to the British. This is based on the estimate of one man killed, three men wounded, and one man with shattered nerves for every 250 yards of our front. Were the performance to take place along the French, Belgian, and

Russian fronts simultaneously, Germany must surely be reduced to financial straits in a few hours. It is not for me to criticise our generals, but I must say that my solution offers a quick and inexpensive means of bringing the war to a close.'

\*

April 28th.

Here we are again. This is simply perfect, and it is as hot as August. Thank you most awfully for the glasses, elastic, and tinfoil. They are all just as I wanted them. I've not made up the catapult as yet, but I've got the idea right enough.

Last night we had a splendid rag, chiefly on the floor; but our innocent gambols were interrupted by heavy firing. However, the firing stopped after a bit, and we carried on.

I've been doing a good deal of hand-grenade business, which is fine fun. We put up a Kaiser Bill of sandbags and a tin pot on the top. Then I offered a prize of ten packets of Woodbines for the man who knocked his helmet off. The competition was fast and furious. Finally a lad called Pathrick Finnigan got a direct hit on the Imperial Countenance (a mangold-wurzel), which was never seen again.

Awful tragedy! The *Follies* are going! Their Division wants them. They are giving their last show to-night and I've got a working party, so can't go.

You may like to know we've got a way of competing with asphyxiating gas. The Ginril is inspecting billets to-morrow, bad luck to him! I've just taken two dear old codgers from my platoon to guard lines of communication, or some such job; they are taking some of the older men.

We have brought down two Bosch aeroplanes in the last two days. One fell behind their lines, but our field-guns knocked it to bits before they could get it away. That was magnificent artillery work. Had a comic working party out

last night. You may remember it was full moon, so we smiled across at the Allymans as we carried up the dug-out frames. Luckily they were working too and did not trouble us too much. When we went up I left the platoon under cover and went ahead to see what we had to do. The Allymans started tuning up a machine gun, and the bullets had the effect of bolting a big rat out of the grass. I chased him all up the road, followed by cheers from some French civvies, who shouted 'Vive le sport! Vive l'Angleterre!' Finally he beat me and got into the ditch. Then I reported to the R.E. and found out about the work. We got it done quite early. Went home and caroused with B Company. Had to get up awfully early (about 7.30) as the General was going to inspect us. He did. It was all right. Our new brigadier is known in military circles as 'Uncle'; he's a dear, as well as a briga—.

Did two hours' platoon and company drill. The Dutchmen began shelling two places a few hundred yards off, and it was difficult to get the words of command heard sometimes. There were two field-guns and a 4.5 howitzer all firing high explosives, so they made a good noise.

I'm glad old Desby didn't get blown up with his bombs. I feel I know as much about things of the kind as most people here.

It is a blazing hot day to-day, and simply glorious. I'm sitting by the window in the—what shall I call it?—in the LOUNGE, wearing a LOUNGE SUIT and LOUNGING languorously. It's all right—I'm only mad.

The Birthday cake is glorious. Thank you so much for it. It has been.

\*

April 30th.

Many happy returns of my birthday! I hope everything is as cheery with you as it is here.



We had a magnificent battle yesterday. Daly and I against the world. We held a balcony with access to the leads, and threw everything we could find at the combined forces of A and B Companies, who answered in kind. They had the better supplies of ammunition, but we had the more tenable positions. However, they kept firing shrapnel (i.e. lumps of earth) to burst all over us, and we lost heavily. Then Young worked round till he had us enfiladed, but I brought up a heavy howitzer and silenced him almost as soon as he came into action with a direct hit on the nose. He retired in disorder. Soon after that the enemy got their own back, as a high explosive piece of cheese hit me in the eye. The damage done was slight. The enemy then subjected our trenches to a perfect hail of shrapnel, and advanced to the foot of the parapet, taking advantage of the slackening in our fire. They were driven off, however, by two heavy bombs from an aeroplane, one of which was a chair, and the other a spring mattress.

After further artillery duels, a direct hit was obtained by a light field gun on the seat of de Havilland's point d'appui. The moral effect of this shot was considerable. The enemy replied with vigour and obtained two hits, one on Daly's shoulder with a turf, and the other in the pit of my supply column. We rushed forward and occupied the crater caused by the explosions, which we still hold in the face of severe counter attacks supported by shell fire.

We've got regular football teams started now, ready for the approaching winter, and play vigorous platoon matches. My platoon had a draw with No. 3 yesterday. We have done some quasi-rugger with the soccer balls, and enjoyed it. Will is not an exceptionally bad wing three-quarter!<sup>1</sup>

The last night of the *Follies* is over, and they've gone.

<sup>1</sup> See page 113.



It is really a great loss, as they made such a splendid relaxation. However, we have very fine concerts of our own, and make a wonderful noise. Do you know a song about 'March on to Berlin'? Having occupied the same trenches for the last five months, we sing it with enthusiasm and conviction.

I'm awfully glad the Canadians did well up there; I knew they would. They really did splendid work; it is not a put-up newspaper show.

I'm always running into people I've met in various places. Yesterday I had my hair cut, had the divil of a bath, and got a new pair of boots, so now I can face the world without a qualm.

It is a perfectly glorious baking hot day, and I'm sitting on the leads. A field gun is firing at intervals some hundred yards away, otherwise I might be in England for the absolute peace and lazy atmosphere. I'm most wonderfully happy, and feel really sorry for people who've had to go home. (No reflection on Home Sweet Home or the dear things there.)

\*

May 2nd.

Everything correct and nice. We've had some fielding practice with trench mortars and other funny things. The beauty of the trench mortar is that if you hear the report, as you generally can, and look in the right place, you see the little souvenir coming along high in the air, and have lots of time to get into a dug-out. They've got two sorts in front of us, one which fires a cylindrical thing like a *Nutter* tin, and the other a round pill, like a young soccer ball. Both very often fail to burst, and often, when they do, they lie where they fall for some seconds, so you get heaps of time to move. They make a fine explosion,

and we make a point of cheering them. They do no damage unless they fall in the trench, and though I've seen hundreds fall, I've never yet seen one do the trick.

We have a man posted when the football shooter is in action who blows a whistle right lustily when he hears one start. You can't see the men for dust when they hear that whistle.

The rifle grenades are smaller, but they used to be annoying, though lately they've forgotten the range and got very inaccurate, and hardly ever get one into the trench. Some poor chaps in a farm got a rotten time last night from some shells. I am glad to say I was able to help a bit.

The artillery observation officer has just tendered me his humble and hearty thanks on the telephone for information leading to the apprehension of a certain *Little Willie* which annoys us. I guessed where he was by the map, within 100 yards. They've spotted his flash now, and proved I was right. Why the divil I should be thanked for it, I don't see, as the gunner men are not affected by this gun, which I was driven to spot by the instinct of self preservation. Perhaps he thinks he'll get credit for it, and his conscience pricks him! Now, when that gun fires at us, they squirt shrapnel at him to put the fear of God into the gunners. They generally knock off work after we've given them a few rounds.

They've just shot a French spy here. I remarked the other day that as I marched my platoon past a certain house some shells came right on to us for no apparent reason. They watched his chimney and saw smoke going up in puffs. Then they searched round and convicted him. Then he was sent to join his Dutch friends in the basement.

Thank you awfully for the nose-bag; they've just been issued to the men. I've given your other one to Young.

Dressing Station,  
May 5th.

I'm all right! I got a bit of a shell on the head yesterday evening. It would have hurt an *ordinary* wooden head, but I was too good for it, and it only gave me a little cut. Got it tied up at once, had dinner, and then walked down here and saw the doctor. I'm going to the Field Ambulance to-day, probably for about two days, and then I shall return to duty. You can guess it is no sort of wound, and if necessary I could carry right on with my work now, as I feel perfectly fit. I'm afraid there's no chance of any leave!

I hope this letter gets to you before any other news of my comic turn. My account is absolutely true—honest Injun. I'll write again to-morrow and tell you about things.

\*

[*Telegram from War Office. Received 8th May.*]

Regret to inform you that 2nd Lieut. D. O. Barnett Leinster Regt. reported wounded 5th May nature and degree not stated Secretary War Office.

\*

May 6th.

Back to the army again!

Here I am in the support trenches. I don't know if you want to hear about things? I was here the day before yesterday when I heard them shelling where I thought my ration-parties would be. I went over and told those concerned that this nuisance must cease. To do them justice they did knock off, and I found I was all correct, the shells having gone over them. I took everyone into the trench for a bit in case they did anything beastly. Suddenly on came the searchlight.

I thought this was funny, so I sent everyone to ground. Then there was a wump over beyond, and a young howitzer shell went zip over my trench and burst just behind. They then turned the searchlight on to the smoke to observe their fire—pretty clever. Very soon another came along, this time some 50 yards in front, and the moment it burst I put my head out over the parapet to see where she went, and just met a splinter coming along. She got me a clip on the forehead, which I soon got tied up, and carried on. They gave us a few more, damaging some of our telephone wires. Then I sent a report to H.Q., sent the ration-parties on, fixed up the anti-stink nose-bags, which they have issued, as well as goggles, and went across to the other end of the line where we all mess together. Here I had dinner with the family and then walked down to the dressing station with de Havilland and got dressed with much iodine by the doctor. Then he and I went to a farm near by and slept the sleep of the just. Next morning I went on to the Field Ambulance in the town and got dressed again. Went to bed in a ward with a colonel of heavy artillery, who had a bad throat. He was a nice old dear. Soon in came a tame parson. As soon as he said his greetings, ‘It’s an Irishman yez are,’ sez I. ‘Sure an’ I am that,’ sez he. It transpired then that he was *our* new padre, a simply glorious man, the very best type of Tipperary priest, with a smile to him that would make the hedges grow. He was quite one of the funniest men I’ve met for ages. He’d come in (under protest) with a strained leg, which was really giving him a lot of pain. He has been through the whole show, and seen most things. Well, in he came, and we made merry with the colonel’s whiskey, and smoked the pipe of peace together, and told bulls till they made us go to sleep. There was heavy firing in the night, and I fairly ramped! I was quite sure we were being attacked, but I know now that it was elsewhere, and a wash-out at that.



We were awakened by shells dropping round about. We got down into the cellars (all the patients were carried out of the wards very quickly) and listened to it. The shells were coming in about fifteen a minute with great regularity. They got on to us after a bit, and sent about fifty on to the ambulance place. We had five horses killed and wounded, and one man killed, and one hit. A lot of the shells didn't burst, which was good. We sat peacefully in the cellar and discussed the situation in France. They stopped after about an hour, and we went back to our rooms. We found one had burst in our room and made a mess of the artillery colonel's bed. Got the mess cleared up, and went back to bed. At about ten in the morning in came Hudson with beastly news. Murphy<sup>1</sup> badly hit. I got dressed in about two minutes and dodged the doctor, who didn't offer serious opposition, and bolted for the trenches across country. Got there feeling very hot but not at all astonished. Everyone pretended to be glad to see me back. Saw poor old skipper, who has got a chance. He was hit by a beastly sniper when going out to get in a man just shot by the same beast, who is up in a house some 900 yards off. Must have got a telescopic sight. Arranged with the howitzers to shell the place. My platoon seemed pleased I'd come back. They grinned like Cheshire cats and said, 'We're glad to see ye back, sirr,' and variations.

And here we are. Boiling hot day and everything peaceful. Murphy is under an awning and can't be moved. We're leaving him in the trench when we relieve to-night, and of course we shall come and see him all the time from billets. He's got an R.A.M.C. man with him all the time, and the doctor is always coming round. If any man could pull himself through from a shot below the heart, he'll do it. He's as hard as nails, and plucky.

<sup>1</sup> Captain of A Company.

I'm as well as I've ever been in my life—not even got a headache now. The cut I've bought is amazingly small, and a poor thing altogether. It is not as deep as the one I got falling down at school. Do you remember that? Let me be truthful for once in my life. That was really a kick on the forehead I got at football!

This is not so bad now. The birds and grass and trees make life very pleasant when there is nothing to make you forget them, and then they brace you up lots. Our three days in the front trenches were vile; we were shelled and bombed to blazes. It is nice being out of rifle-grenade range, as they put wind up more than most shells.

The losses in the town among the civies this morning were pretty heavy. What swine the Bosches be! As I was coming up at full speed a few hours ago, there was a big mess-up in most streets, and tiles and glass all over the road. They seem to have left our old billet alone, however.

\*

May 7th.

Murphy died last night. He was the living force at the heart of everything here, and I owe everything to him from the beginning. Sorry, but I can't write a letter.

My head is quite all right.

\*

Billets,

May 8th.

Everything running well. De Havilland is taking over A as O.C.Co. and I am very glad, as he's a good man, and in A we are very particular!

Marched a party out yesterday to Murphy's burial at a place some 800 yards from the trenches near our dressing

station. I never saw the men so moved at any officer's burial, and I've seen some. He leaves an awful big gap in everybody's outlook on life.

We've done some drill to-day, company and platoon stunts, and in a quarter of an hour my platoon is doing some shooting on the range we've got here.

Conversation overheard. 'Hullo, English!' 'Well, Allyman?' 'Come over here you bloody English pig!' 'Come over, is it? Come half way yesilf an' I'll give yez a sup of rum.' Inarticulate gurgles from the gentleman opposite.

Here we are again. My platoon has shot, and so have I. They weren't bad, but I was better! The practice was a ten round rapid at a 2 inch bull at 60 yards. I got my ten in a 4 inch bull, beat de Havilland by a short neck and won five francs from him!

I should be glad if you'd send me a packet of plain P.C.s (though the cooking is all done by men) as they save a lot of trouble, and people are tolerant (I hope) of the brutal soldiery sending them instead of letters sometimes.

\*

Billets,  
May 9th.

I hope everything is going well with you. I'm going very strong. We were confined to billets yesterday, but nothing happened, and to-day is as usual.

Messages keep coming in of the fighting north and south; the French are doing awfully well, and we seem to be making a decent recovery from a bad knock. There is heavy firing round about, and the air is pretty electric everywhere. The latest states that German cavalry have been seen in our uniforms and stripping the dead in our trenches. They are swine.

We've got a new gas heavier than the chlorine the Allymans use, which gets underneath it and drives it up. Some idea that! I think they won't have many more big successes with that particular devilry. We are ready for it here, anyway.

This morning Julius Cæsar made another oration to the legions. It comprised, among other things, attacks, defences, rapid fire, bombs, gases, getting drunk, dealing with spies, competing with vermin, and other social problems. It lasted nearly an hour, and they seemed interested. Then we did some rapid loading practice and musketry. Then I found a man I wanted to scarify, and did. In fact there is nothing wanting to make a man perfectly happy.

They shelled the town a bit yesterday again, but did hardly any damage. The people are getting used to it, and just shrug their shoulders—'c'est la guerre!'—and mechanically move off towards the cellars. An aeroplane dropped an incendiary bomb the other day, which made a hole four feet deep and sent up a great sheet of flame ten feet high, without any kind of explosion. No damage done.

Did some rifle shooting again, and got on fairly decently. Won ten francs from Ducat of B Company at revolver shooting. He only hit the target (large) once, and I hit it twice!! Felt quite a marksman. It's a good thing the Allymans run large. It would be awful if we were fighting Japs or anything like that.

\*

Billets,  
May 11th.

Something wrong with poor old de Havilland. He thinks he's got measles! This particular frightfulness has been on the war-path lately, and several of our men have had it and gone to hospital. I hope he has not got anything that will



take him away, but I'm afraid he will go, as he's been pretty chippy lately. If he goes, Young will be O.C. A Company I suppose. He did it before once for a bit (with my able assistance!) and got on very decently.

This morning we did some battalion drill—rather amusing, especially when two sections of fours fell over a dead horse. We had to stop because they began shelling rather close. (We were in plain view of the German artillery observing station all the time!)

It is gloriously hot to-day and everything is splendid. I have disposed of all the adipose deposit I'd collected when I was last home, and now I'm very lean and fit as a flea. Did some machine-gun shooting yesterday on the range, and got on very well considering I've only fired about half a dozen times in my life. I could compete with any number of Allymans in close formation. We've had very good news of the French attack. They've taken ten guns—six *Little Willies*, two *White Hopes*, and two *Portmanteaux*, being 3 inch, 4'5, and 6 inch respectively. The Allymans attacked one of our divisions at Wipers very heavily after a big dose of gas. Everyone was ready and had their nose-bags on, and the gas had no effect whatever—then the infantry came marching along anyhow, thinking they had us cold. They were met with the regular British 'rapid' and simply went to bits, never got near us. Isn't that splendid?

One of our aeroplanes was brought down yesterday, but we brought down one of theirs within a few hours, and got even. It's rather awful seeing one of our own planes turn over and go crashing down, but to see a Bosch do it is joy unspeakable.

Doctor's just been, and confirms the suspicion of measles! de Havilland is moving off to-day to the 'bally hole'. It is beastly sickening. Doctor saw my head and is quite happy about it. So am I.

Enclose a target at which I had three shots rapid (inside eight seconds) at 60 yards. It seems good enough for a blind man.

\*

Billets,  
May 12th.

De Havilland has gone off, and Young is O.C. Company. Things continue to go along much as usual. Here we are in France purging our emotions with the correct Aristotelian homœopathic solution P<sub>2</sub>T.

Good news from the French. They are going along splendidly. They've taken 34 M.G's and some 3,000 prisoners in their little show, besides eleven guns. This is really awfully nice. The weather is glorious and we have most excellent rags.

An aeroplane dropped notices in the 'bally hole' the other day to the effect that they're going to shell it to-day! I suppose it will be a long-range affair—it will have to be at eight or nine miles' range at least—and presumably with pretty heavy stuff. Poor old de Havilland! I hope they don't get him. It would be awful rotten luck, the first time for three months he's been out of normal artillery range! By the way, I see they've killed Poulton. I'm very sorry indeed about that.

We go up again to-night, but only into supports for the first three days. When we go to the advanced trenches I am taking a cushey bit, as last time I had the worst. Did I tell you I lost eleven men killed and wounded last time, and one man off his head?

The Allymans have been wonderfully quiet these last few days. I wonder what they are up to. They have hardly shelled at all, and not a shot has come from their trenches. I believe they've evacuated their front line—just leaving

a caretaker! It is quite a picnic since we came out, and the —— (who relieve us) have hardly lost a man. O si sic semper!

\*

May 12th.

I've just heard Kenneth is dead. Kenneth was a good boy, and I'm sure he died just as he lived, and no one could better that. I've written to his people. This is the first time the war has hit me hard. Cheer up, my very dears. Kenneth's all right. He'll carry on. It would take more than that to stop him.

Of course I've got a bit gone, but I'm healed, and can carry on, and do better work. It is only the selfish part of us that goes on mourning. The soul in us says 'sursum corda'.

I've looked at death pretty closely and I know what it is. A man is called away in a moment and goes before God. Kenneth went as we know him, the boy we are proud of. Think of him as he is, and the grief slips off you.

\*

Support Trenches,

May 13th.

Yesterday Young and I bought a 12 bore shot gun in the town for 90 fr., which we brought up with us. We relieved all right, but one of my men was shot on the road while carrying rations. I think he'll get over it as he's a strong man. There's a lot more apparatus for dealing with gas, and a lot more instructions. We make a regular drill of it, and the men are getting quite smart. 'On the command *Two* raise the goggles with a circular motion till they strike the face with a smart click.'

This morning I saw four pigeons coming along very high and fast from the town towards the Allymans. Rushed for the gun, got a cartridge in, and dropped the last bird thirty yards in front of the trench. Crawled out in the long grass and brought him in. He was a carrier, sure enough, with a number and the name of the town on his leg-band. He carried no message, so I suppose he was only out for a constitutional. Sent him in to H.Q. with a note, and am now waiting for the D.S.O.! Splendid news from the French in the south. They're going ahead magnificently.

But it rains all the time, and the world is unhappy. You must feel dear old Kenneth's death very deeply, nearly as much as I do perhaps. Still I've got the only sort of work there is to stiffen my back against. You at home have not taken the progressive course in the death of friends, and I am very sorry for you and love you very much. But brace up and think how pleased he is with himself, and be proud that he is of ours always.

\*

Support Trenches,  
May 15th.

Everything going very well. Hit another pigeon yesterday, but he carried on and dropped in the German lines, so we shan't have them starved out for a bit. Watched a big rat running about on a breastwork, and plugged a lump of shell at him, which knocked him clean off into a stream, where unfortunately he made good his escape. He was absolutely black and very big, so perhaps he was Old Harry engaged in espionage. I don't think he'll do it again in my trench. There are thousands of mice in my dug-out, which keep me awake by running over me, and nibbling corn just by my ear with loud scrunchy noises. I'm getting fed up with them and I shall kill one very soon.



Last night I put up a big traverse to stop enfilade fire, and had not finished it more than two seconds before an M.G. opened from long range straight down our trench and rattled bullets into my traverse, where they stopped. I was rather pleased. My platoon is a long way from the rest of the Company, holding a bit of the old original A Company trench. I sleep over there, but come here for meals and social intercourse—a distance of half a mile or so along the trench.

We had a nose-bag parade yesterday, and all solemnly put on our respirators and goggles. It was funny. If that does not put the fear of God into the Allymans, they deserve to win this war. Everything is very quiet nowadays.

Outside a certain house the other night a loud explosion was heard, followed by yells. Daylight revealed two dead Allymans blown up by one of their own hand grenades. It was the exact place where I threw one some time ago at one of their working parties. I think mine was the better show. Our sappers made up some grenades with instantaneous fuse, pretending to be slow-burning, and left them about for the Dutchmen to use. Perhaps they had one of those.

\*

Advanced Trenches,  
May 17th.

We had rather a rotten day yesterday, as the Allymans found our range with a little miniature trench-mortar, which throws a ball of iron as big as a young football about an inch thick and full of the most devilish high explosive. The whole show weighs about 60 pounds, and the burst of it makes the ground rock for hundreds of yards. They dropped three in quick succession on a bit of our trench, blotting out some fifteen yards, including three dug-outs. Two men were killed and several more or less wounded.

These footballs—thrown by the pukka *Minenwerfer*—are rather amusing from a little distance. You hear a great belch from the German trenches and see a big black ball coming curving along high in the air. (It is like fielding practice, and no more nerve-racking than the first ‘do’ in 2nd XI. nets!) Everyone bolts from where the pill is likely to drop. It generally bursts as soon as it hits the ground, and you should see the splash! They put one into a wee bit pond in front, and soaked everyone for fifty yards each way. One pitched slap in our parapet, and sent some twenty great sandbags hurtling up in the air about thirty feet. They fairly cheered with delight at that.

Then we came into action, and dropped a beauty into the thick of the shouts, which stopped abruptly! They kept sending their big black souvenirs over, but most were just behind, and only ploughed up some dead sheep we’d buried. Chlorine wasn’t in it!

We sent over all the bombs we had and directed the fire of the guns on to where the mortar seemed to be. Anyway it stopped firing, and I hope the fat ‘unter-Offizier’ with the red beard (I’m sure he had a red beard) got a few shrapnel in him.

Last night I went out for a walk with two men, and we lay out on the grass and listened to them working and gargling to each other (their substitute for speech). It was most exhilarating. Suddenly there was a flash and a familiar belch from their trenches. We heard the bomb hiss overhead (of course we thought it was coming on us) and drop with a thud behind. Then the whole ground swung and jolted like a railway accident, and there was an awful tearing bang, some fifty yards off us, but in the quiet night it fairly made you sit up.

We listened to the Allymans a bit and then came in. We found no one had been hit by the mortar. It is a very

good thing that the report is so unmistakable, and that you have heaps of time to get clear when you see Jeremiah coming over. The men who were hit were inside their dug-out, and the only people who did not peregrinate to avoid the rencontre.

They've always been sending these funny things over, but they've never been lucky before. Probably never will again, as they seem pretty erratic.

I found a photo of a dud bomb in the *Mail*, which I am sending. We've got one of these gracing the piazza outside our dug-out. Mind you, it is a big weight for one man to lift.

Here I got a message that a man who is suspected of being a spy, dressed as a sapper, has gone down the trench. 'Phoned up to C Company and went down at top speed. Met a C Company sergeant with a fixed bayonet and the quasi sapper. Had a friendly chat, in which he made a very good show of a clear conscience. Personally I think he's all right, but I've sent him on to the unit that sent the message. I'll let you know the outcome later. There was a sportsman who used to go round our trenches regularly in the uniform of a gunner major. We never got him, I'm sorry to say.

The Allymans shelled our dressing station the other day; shelled the doctor out of bed at 4 in the morning. Poor old doc! They haven't shelled us with big shells this time, but there have been heaps of *Little Willies*. No one minds them at all.

We are a very happy family in 'A' now. I hope we stop like this for a long time. We get on very well together.

\*

Billets,  
May 19th.

I'm feeling most awfully bucked with life lately. I haven't felt so rag-timey for years. We came in last night after



a characteristic relief in which the —— went astray and came along in dribblets. The last but one to arrive was the platoon sergeant, and the last was the officer! I handed over duly to the biggest idiot I've met since I last handed over, and came home. A machine gun opened on the road 200 yards ahead of us and fairly knocked sparks out of it. It had (here three shells came along and burst within a hundred yards of the billet) fortunately finished (one more—two more) by the time we got there, but I found (one more) No. 2 platoon lying in the ditch full of water. I showed them a good place to get under cover till their officer had handed over and come to march them home, and carried on. We got home all correct (one more) and very cheery, singing all the way. (One more, farther away.)

I gather there is a funny story against me in the Company. I was going (one more) through my trench when they began to shell, and I sat down in an obscure but safe corner till such time as they should stop, and I heard a conversation going on in a dug-out. Says Paddy O'Connell, 'Ah, that's loike Misther Barnett an' the dead fellow: "Carry on," he sez, "carry on an' be damned to ye".' I'd quite forgotten the incident, and find it hard to imagine the circumstances. There were howls of laughter from the section when Paddy made the quotation, which was in an imitation of my Saxon brogue.

They are shelling the town like blazes, but not coming anywhere near us now. We've turned the men out on to their shelling parade ground, where they are fairly safe. Did I tell you that last time we were in billets they killed my sanitary man with a shell? He was a dear old thing, who took the greatest pride in his work. Meanwhile they continue to shell the town.

The day before yesterday in the afternoon as I was sitting in my dug-out, who should come along the trench



but Wilfrid Adams. He was attached for 24 hours as a part of his instruction, just as I was. Wasn't it splendid getting him? Of course he got our brigade, and then two of his lot were to go to the Leinsters, so he came, and asked for A Company. I took him on and showed him all there was to see. In the afternoon we had a trench-mortar duel with the Allymans which should have delighted the heart of a new man.

We were firing away at their trenches, always keeping an eye open for their football. Suddenly the big black fellow came flying over, and we dived for cover. She burst some fifteen yards away. Then we came out and carried on with it. As soon as we got to our own trench (we had the artillery duel from D Company) they began shelling and throwing things about, as they'd got awfully fed up with our two trench-mortars, which had been in action all day. We sat tight in a corner while they squirted *Little Willies* all over the place. Three men were slightly hit by one shell, and that was all. We got through to our batteries on the 'phone, and they started. They shelled the trenches in front with heavy lyddite, and the place where *Little Willie* seemed to be, with shrapnel. I fired rifle-grenades, and Young worked the trench-mortar. It was splendid! Finally we had the last word, as the Allymans gradually gave up their frightfulness and stopped. Then we stopped. After a bit, *Little Willie* began again, just as Adams should have been getting home, so we had to hold him up for a bit. However, he managed to get away, and is now safely back at H.Q. We were awfully glad to have him, and everyone liked him very much. He did very well; and it is not an easy situation, as I well remember. I think he'll make a good man.

By the way, a peculiar looking lad went down our trench the other day. Oh, I told you all about him. He was *not* a spy, after all. In fact, he was the chief draughtsman in

a new company of the R.E. He was a most amazin' suspicious character, as he went all around asking questions, with a map of our trenches. As it turned out, he was drafting a new map. I had talked seriously to my platoon on the subject of holding up officers they don't know who ask impertinent questions, and I see they laid it to heart.

I went to a listening post that night, and in the dark I couldn't recognise the sentries. 'Who's that?' sez I. The man said nothing, but turned and glowered at me. Then he brought his bayonet up to my chest, and said truculently: 'An' fwat d'ye want to know my name for?' I laughed so much that he got excited. Finally he spotted who I was and began laughing too. He was painfully distressed and apologetic, but I was awfully bucked with him, and told him he couldn't have done better. I told him that he ought to have an iron cross, and we parted friends. He is a nice little man called Lamb. Next morning I asked him if he knew me, and told him to have a good look so as to know me again. He said: 'Sure, oi can't t'ink how oi could be missin' the soize of yez, Misther Barnett!' I reminded him that there were some pretty large Allymans about. I'm awfully pleased with my babes just now; they've improved a lot lately, and I've got a very decent lot of N.C.O's.

This morning they spotted some men playing football in a field, and fired shrapnel at them, knocking out five. (They were not any of them ours.) Then they went and put some into the town, but did not do much damage. Thank you all at home for the lyddite yesterday.

\*

Billets,  
May 19th.

You are one of God's own dears. Thank you very much for your photograph, which I like very much.

I've got a long account to settle out here, and Kenneth is at the top of it. I think they'll find that will cost them a lot. His death hits me harder than the death of all the valiant men I've grown to like and love out here.

The love that grows quickly and perhaps artificially when men are together up against life and death has a peculiar quality. Death that cuts it off does not touch the emotions at all, but works right in the soul of you ; this is so incomprehensible that you are only vaguely conscious of the change which you find there later, and shake hands with it. Regret is what you feel ; but there is something rather better than that really, which I think is what makes men. My love for Kenneth was not a war-baby, and so his loss is more painful to me than any other. But I know he's all right.

Don't be anxious about chlorine ; we've got it beaten by an extraordinary rapidity of organisation which is quite unlike the work of the Army I belong to.

I do hope you aren't having a *θυμοφθόρος* time at inspections. I'm always thinking about you and praying that you aren't unhappy about me or any other worry. If there is any soul *εὐδαίμων* in this world, it is me—real happiness of the whole being, the only sort there is, *οὔσα εὐδαιμονία*. It makes me sing and grin to myself in the dark. And thank God, I believe I can do what is up to me.

\*

Billets,  
May 20th.

I've been here four months and four days.

Last night I had to take my platoon away and occupy a position in support to a neighbouring battalion. When we got clear of the town, a dear old M.G. opened on the road and we had to take up a strategic position in a very smelly



ditch. When they'd done, we went on and took up our line. I went to report to the C.O. of the battalion I was under ; and the sniping on the road was considerable. Had a chat with my friend the Colonel, and gave him to understand that though he had been out for two months, he did not know everything yet. We got on very well together. He gave me some cigars and I went my way rejoicing. The sniping was still pretty thick.

Installed my flock in their place (the nature of which I must not say) and spent the night walking about and singing. It was a lovely night, and I had a lot of thinking to do, so I was very glad of it. Went over to see Laville, who had his platoon in a similar position close by, and we strolled up and down the spaces between the bullets. It began to get light before 2, and was broad daylight by half past 3. Had to rag one of my N.C.O.'s severely for practically refusing to comply with an order from a fellow with one more stripe than himself. It was the best ragging I've ever done, and actually drew tears of penitence from the old ruffian. I think he'll be all right now, but of course I could have reported him and had him rejuiced, if I had thought it necessary. You would laugh to see me cursing a tough old nut of fifteen years' service! I couldn't do it if they knew my past life, which I spend most of my time concealing from them.

I went and looked up the graves by our dressing station. Tidied up Paddy Taaffe's a bit, and made him a new cross with green turfs. Murphy is there, with Andrews and Bate. By the way, Murphy has just been made a major, so he'll be wearing a crown on his cuffs and shoulder-straps now. I've just remembered a story about him. He and I were paying out the Company and up came a little wizened man. 'Name?' 'M'Gurk, sorr.' Murphy wrote down the barbarous cognomen in silence. Then he burst out: 'Why the hell can't you get a decent name like Murphy?'



We marched back here to billets all right at 7 this morning. A very cheery march, the men going very well indeed. We got back in half an hour, a good two miles. Changed, and had a big breakfast. An hour after had a splendid bath, and here I am at 25 minutes to 11.

Young is doing O.C. Company very well, and I hope he keeps it on. I hear de Havilland has gone home. He is going to look you up at 20 M.A. and I've asked him to name a day well ahead so that I can let you know and you can be there. I think he'll be able to give you an idea of things a bit. He came to us a week or so before our advance, and I've worked under him and with him a lot, and he is one of the best. He and Murphy were wonderful together. You must have had a time answering letters from people who wanted to know about my 'wound'. You ought to have had it typed on a slip: 'Both doing well', or something of that kind. Has Barker still got my souvenir?<sup>1</sup> I should have thought it would be of only moderate value as an advertisement of their Turkish delight. If you'll send me enough of that stuff to pad myself all over, I'll go and take the trenches by myself—and then some . . .

\*

Billets,  
May 21st.

Slept a bit yesterday afternoon and woke up to find I'd got to take a digging party at 7.30, which struck me as rotten luck after the night before. However, I didn't hurt the C.O's feelings by refusing to go, and at 7.30 we paraded duly. There were several men absent, and one drunk. Took the necessary steps and went off. When we arrived I reported to R.E. and was shown the work and what wanted

<sup>1</sup> See page 103.

doing. Passed the word for section-commanders, to explain to them, so that they could oversee the work. One didn't come; proved to be drunk! I was awfully sick, as he is one of the ablest men I've got. He was a lance-sergeant once, but 'threw a drunk' and was reduced. He got a lance-corporal's stripe again about a month ago, and would have risen quickly.

I'm very sick with my platoon on the strength of last night. Hitherto we have been easily the best disciplined platoon in the company, as the N.C.O's are exceptional. It is rotten when a really efficient and plucky N.C.O. makes an ass of himself, and has to have his power for good and evil cut down to the sphere of the *simple soldier*. Of course the officer-man has a lot to do with the behaviour of his men, and it is rotten to have to admit failure in several cases. My self-satisfaction has had a nasty jar, as I always thought we were the best platoon with the least crime, when—bang go two N.C.O's and half a dozen men! I've got my work cut out for me now, and perhaps I'm chastened and shall do better! Wish me luck.

I've got to take a party to learn demolitions this afternoon; so if bits of things drop about inexplicably at Burnt Hill you'll know who it is, which knowledge may help you in the jig-saw operations.

Last night some of the first brigade of K's army were sent up to be attached to regulars for instruction, and everyone is as pleased as Punch with them. They're fine.

There was a fine fusillade of chaff when the Scotch lads filed past my working party last night. 'Does Mrs. Kitchener know you're out?' 'Hoi, Jock, ye've dropped ye sp-horran.' 'An' did they give ye roifles or bagpipes?' They gave as good as they got, I must say. 'Ah kenned a mon named Murrphy, an' he got drunk an' kilt his mother-in-law.' Pretty good that! 'Hey, laddie, carry my pack, and I'll

give ye a potato for yesilf.' This was unfortunate, and Kelly rose to the occasion. Says he, 'Sure and a b——y poor spud it would be that ye'd give away, ye Sc—hotch Jew!'

These fellows are next to regular soldiers in discipline and spirit. I think they'll do as well as the Canadians, whom I liked awfully. The Terriers who came out about a month or two ago have quite settled down, and are worth their place. They are even taking on some of the new men.

Just remembered I'd forgotten to send in the 'grenade returns', so I had to go off and do it.

\*

Billets,  
May 22nd.

Yesterday afternoon I marched a party of four N.C.O's and twelve men to the R.E. shop some two miles from here. I found the sapper-man whom I know well, as he's always doing jobs round about our line. He introduced us to wet and dry gun-cotton (in tabloid form), 'blastine', and other stimuli to activity. We learnt how to use them and what their various effects were in various positions. Then we all made up some fuses with instantaneous coil and detonators, and went out to the edge of civilisation, where we made loud and unseemly noises accompanied by showers of earth and stones. It is a splendid game, and has unending variety of interest. We go again this afternoon.

I was introduced to a new bomb, which is the last word. It combines tremendous power with perfect simplicity and extraordinary handiness. This will be the bomb of the future for us, and I expect they won't issue any more of the old type after they have brought out a complete establishment of the new. It is an oval iron affair, just a good size to hold



in your hand, grooved to burst into effective bits, and the beauty of it is that the lighting action is automatic, worked by a spring which you compress in your hand, so that the fuse lights as soon as you throw it, and burns for five seconds. Till you want the bomb there is a pin which holds the spring compressed, and when that is out the spring remains so till the thing has left your hand. I'm afraid that will leave you cold, but it delights my heart!

This morning at 8.30 we were for parade. I woke up at 8, and so did not get any breakfast. Went out and drilled furiously by platoons. At 9 I had to give evidence to the Company commander (one Young by name) in the case of my ex-drunk N.C.O. He passed the case on to the C.O. because company commanders can't give more than C.B. So at 10 I had to go to the august orderly room. Gave my evidence and saw the man rejoiced. He was a corp'ril once! I shall have to find a new section commander.

At 10.30 we washed out our parade and came in and had breakfast. It is now 11.30, and at 12 my platoon is shooting on the range. At 1.45 I've got this demolition business again, so I'm having a busy day. I've every intention of going to the *Fancies* this afternoon, a show which we've got here now, much on the lines of the *Follies* who had to move off as their division was shifted. I believe the new thing is first-rate.

Here I am again at 1 o'clock, having had my men on the range for an hour. They did very well indeed, and I had a shoot and got a very decent target.

It is a scorching hot day, and I'm simply dripping and I've got to take that wretched demolition party over two miles of pavé roads and back again! While I remember it, please send me some thin khaki shirts, or better still a fig-leaf painted brown, with the Leinster badge in gold, with



a bathing machine rampant and some gules (whatever they are) couchant in a field of anything you like except turnips, because that is where our trenches are.

I've got this business in half an hour, so I must go and have lunch.

\*

Billets,  
May 23d.

'Deare Muther,

if we ar spaired to com hoame we will have a good tyme of it wid the help of god and now I must draw to a close no more for the presen from youre fond good sone Paddy to my good muther with Friendship and good respect to you goodby till we meat agen x x x mick is lying in horstable, an do not send me any parsels becus it is 10 to 1 whether you git them or not. goodby, dere muther, from youre loving Paddy.'

This is not faked, but a genuine transcription of a letter. Don't you think 'Friendship and good respect' is a beautiful old-world phrase?

I got a letter from Uncle Buz, such a nice letter, with an admirable ballad about one Sir Kesar. I like answering nice letters.

This morning we did the usual company training stunts, plus a comic attack, in which No. 4 platoon did sterling work!

Yesterday afternoon after the demolition business, which was very fine, I went to the *Fancies*. It was like the curate's egg, but the 'parts' were above the average hen's work. There were some splendid songs—you can guess a whole new side has been added to the world's humour by this little world out here—and a revue which was really beautifully futile in conception and excellently incoherent in execution—the whole making up, mark you, a work of art with the great quality of unity, by the law of mathematics that

two minuses make a plus. Anyway, it was a good ragtime rag, the sort of thing Father could appreciate, bless his heart.

I'm feeling most awfully well and happy. Everything seems so wonderfully worth while. They say 'carry-on' is a word of this war. It is really the jolly old progressive ideal of a man, that was just as complete a thing three thousand years ago. Nobody can get away from it here, where you bump into the continuity of things in odd ways. It would be a very long worm that didn't waggle its tail about for joy in this life.

You see odd things sometimes: in the window of a shop 'CHIPS et CAFE'. You see how they've discovered the tastes of the inevitable and inestimable Cockney.

I've just seen a really excellent metal wreath in purple and black, paid for by the company, with the inscription: 'In loving memory of the officers, N.C.O's and men of 'A' Company 2nd Leinsters.' We are putting it up at our graveyard by the dressing station, which is just what you'd like your friends to have for a resting place, a topping grass meadow sloping down to a jolly little stream, and any amount of little birds about. I like men who think of these things. You won't improve on the Leinsters.

I heard them shelling one of our aeroplanes, and went out to see. Two shells burst just over us some 3,000 feet up, and suddenly a shrapnel bullet got me on the thigh, bounced off, and hit Laville a resounding smack. However, neither of us will appear in the casualty list for the said wounds! I've found the offending bullet, and I'm sending it back with a complaint, desiring them to be more careful in future.

What's all this about Kitchener? The *Daily Mail* seems awfully excited, and seems to have lost all sense of proportion. It's an amazing idea to call for resignation because of a wrong estimate made for entirely unprecedented conditions. Surely no other living man could have done his

work? The fact of course remains that we have very little high explosive, and lashings of shrapnel. H.E. is the shell for attacking, because you blow the defenders out of their trenches. Shrapnel is for defenders, to stop an advance of infantry, but no more use against prepared positions than a sick headache. But I hope to God Kitchener pulls through. There seems to be strong feeling for him and against the Harmsworthidæ, in the Stock Exchange and elsewhere.

Well now, goodbye, dears. If you aren't cheery, please have some of mine, as I've got it to spare!

\*

Advanced Trenches,  
May 26th.

So sorry I've not written lately, but I've been at it day and night instructing K's army! This makes the 3rd generation of soldiers I've taught their job to! Canadians, Territorials, and now these. The other two lots have done me credit, and these lads are as good as anything I've seen, and their officers are a fine lot. My position is that of the junior maths. master who rubs his hands when one of his boys is made F.R.S. Anyway, I showed the Canadians what to do in a trench, and I'm still plugging along teaching the same old elements to the young idea, who very soon go on to higher things than I know of. Perhaps I shall have a show of my own one day!

Yesterday I got winded by a bit of trench-mortar, which burst in the air in front of me, but it was only like being hit by a cricket ball, and didn't even lay me out. They dropped one of their best on a breastwork just behind my trench, and cleared a gap of some 30 feet, representing over a ton of earth, sandbags, boards, and iron pickets. After some time a rifle came down, all the wood having

disappeared. No one was hit, luckily, as I heard and saw Johnnie coming at a few seconds' notice and got a yell in edgeways, 'Lie down!' and they did.

It is tremendously hot to-day, and it is no good trying to be energetic. I've not had another shot at a pigeon lately, but I did the next best and caught five rats in the trap, and got one with a bayonet, which I thought rather skilful! We have gas-bag parades regularly now at odd times and we've got very slippery at it. Gott strafe England!

The K's army lads have gone back now, but they learnt a lot in the short time. Talking of K. please tell Northcliffe that he is — well, put it in your own words, but don't forget the red pepper.

\*

Advanced Trenches,  
May 27th.

I'm puffing along as usual and it's awfully hot. You may guess what boots and puttees feel like. We've had an easy time these two days, though at intervals of about twenty minutes all last night they fired a *Little Willie* on to our trench. They hit no one. We've had a rest of a whole day from that ghastly *Minenwerfer*, which would put the wind up an armour-plated tortoise. I hope it's burst and laid out the men that work it.

I'm glad you're having a good time among the babies. Give them the love of the family black sheep who has had to go abroad.

\*

Advanced Trenches,  
May 29th.

We are in a good quiet bit now. B Company, who took over from us, got pounded vigorously the following morning,



so we didn't regret the relief. The Allyman artillery has been very active, but has not sent anything at all to my trench, so I've given them permission to go on whenever they want to.

We've got a new captain in A ; of course it is difficult for a man new to the job with a lot of war-worn subalterns, but he was all through South Africa.

Yesterday I had a bomb-throwing séance in an old communication trench, and it was quite a good show. One of the bombs (which in civil life was a jam tin) had a jaggy top, on which I cut my thumb, but I am not coming home for it.

There was a lot of conversation flying last night : 'Cheer up, Allyman, you'll soon be dead.' 'Come out, English, and we'll fight you fair.' 'Fair, is it? Sure it would kill yez.' Then out spake Kelly : 'Send the Kayser over here and we'll make *bute-laces* out of him.'

This morning early they began shelling our dressing station, and finally set it on fire. There was strenuous work getting the stuff and people out of it. It is pretty well done in now.

Had a nose-bag parade this morning. Hope we shan't ever need to use this apparatus, but if it is used properly you are perfectly safe. Hear we've got a bomb out loaded with all sorts of odd things like ether, mustard, cayenne, and perhaps bully beef, but I am not sure of the last. Anyway, they ought to make the Allymans' hair curl. You'd realise the potency of a bomb with this result if you'd seen a Dutchman's hair, as worn in France, two millimetres of pig's bristles, generally red.

There was a light shining away last night behind the German trench, obviously put there to make us shell the house and waste our precious H.E. However, we just shot at it with rifles until it went out.

I am awfully well and fit, and pleased with the world. I've just heard I've been recommended for an Iron Cross or something, so perhaps we shall hear about it by next Christmas.

\*

Advanced Trenches,  
May 30th.

Everything quiet and altogether excellent. It is very hot, but there is no need to rush about. Yesterday B Company got shelled again a bit, but hardly any damage was done. We've had nothing near us here except the friendly little bullets.

Young's platoon sent a guard down to the dressing station which was burnt yesterday, namely three men and a lance-corporal, to look after things. Well, they looked after the things so conscientiously that the lance-corporal and two men got drunk, and the third man shot himself in the arm! So we've sent four more, and await results.

Did some sniping through a loop-hole plate until some fellow started hitting my plate 15 a minute. Then I stopped. Just after that he got through one of the sand-bags, and I found his bullet, which was a new thing they've got for penetrating steel plates, very long and with a steel point. Gave it to the general, who came round this morning, and he seemed awfully bucked with it.

\*

Billets,  
May 31th.

Handed over and came back here without misfortune last night. I didn't lose a man this last stay in the trenches, which was the quietest go we've had since we held the new line. It is a perfectly glorious day, and I've got my thin

undies on, for which very many thanks. They are particularly nice. Started the day with a kit inspection, which was very satisfactory, as my platoon was only deficient of one entrenching tool handle between them.

Poor old —— had to sleep in a semi-decayed breastwork some of the time we were up, and he's swarming! At least he was, but he's been so frightful to them that they're all either dead or haven't the heart to bite. He's been soaking in Jeyes since he came in, and now I think he's gassed them out of their trenches.

A couple of men of the Rifle Brigade went the other night up to the German wire with a newspaper account of how the Prussian gunners wiped out some Saxons who wanted to surrender. I hope our friends the 133rd will take it to heart, and do the dirty on their Prussian friends at the earliest opportunity. There is an R.B. corporal who goes out every night and has a look at the Allymans generally from close up to their wire. He tried to bag a listening post they have, but that night it wasn't sent out, so he's waiting till it is.

Pearman went out and pushed a bomb into them the other night, the same place as I did mine, only he didn't hear them running as I did. Perhaps he wiped up the party.

I've got simply nothing to tell you, as everything is so unusually normal!

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

Billets,

June 1st,

I hope things are well with you. I'm doing very well and enjoying myself. We had a good quiet time in the trench last go, but the next time we go up it will be different, as we are moving to the very place where things happen most. You can guess where that is. I'm afraid some of us won't last very long now, but that is all in the day's work, and

makes no difference whatever to me or anyone else. Anyway we shall bump into our fate very soon, whatever it is, and there is a chance of getting home for a bit. In the meantime everything is about as excellent as it could be, and I'm having the time of my life.

I've learnt the elements of demolition with gun-cotton and other things, and it strikes me as a fine game. I shall be a dangerous neighbour when I get back to England.

Please don't tell my people I'm moving, as I'm going to try and make them think I'm still here.

\*

Support trenches,  
June 2nd.

Had to come up here with Young and our two platoons for 24 hours. We came last night and have been listening to the Allymans shelling the advanced trench, and being glad we are where we are. They were at it off and on all night, with one pretty heavy howitzer and the inevitable *Little Willie*. This morning they've got the same howitzer and another heavy gun. They seem to have stopped now, and our heavies have been administering a lyddite pill to a part of their trench which the aeroplane photograph shows to be like a line of semi-detached villas . . . about twenty big dug-outs in a row. Good luck to the heavies. It is very hot and pleasant. I've got the shot-gun and am waiting for a pigeon.

\*

Billets,  
June 4th.

Here we are again. I'm so sorry I've not written lately, but we've been so busy with obscure movements of things, and there has been such a lot of extra odd jobs that I've not



had a minute. I was relieved from the support trenches and went back to billets. Since then we've been route-marching and working very hard.

I met Sydney the other day at last! He was very flourishing, and we drove round in style in his motor ambulance to the tea-shop, &c. He had seen some lace in the town, and thought he remembered the place where he'd seen some refugees making it. However he made a mistake first time. We got it right second time, and I bought you this wee bit which I hope is what you'll like, though I can't tell if it's good or bad. Anyway it represents half an hour's busy search!

I managed to get a little time at the Bally hole the other day. I found a dear old girl who loved all Artists, as she'd billeted six for all the time we were there. When I told her my name she was awfully bucked, as she'd *entendu parler de* me! There was another lady (and very nice too) who actually asked Young if he knew me! I only spoke to her about twice in a café, and I suppose my name must have amused her. It's all right, there's no need to be nervous, as I've not seen her at all for nearly five months, swelp me I never!

I rather think they'll send us up to the trenches a bit before our time's up, as things are running rather outside routine. I'm so frightfully well and happy I don't know what to do with myself. It was splendid seeing dear old Sydney. Cheero and *bonne chance*.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

Somewhere (in a wood),

June 4th.

I want to ask a great favour of you. We've moved away from our old place two days' march to this part of the world—the gas area. And I don't want my people to know

I've moved away from the comparatively peaceful quarter of the globe, because they'd be horribly anxious all the time, and there would be nothing gained. So I want to write to you about things that happen 'ita ut' you don't give the show away, or let them suspect I'm anywhere but down in the old Kentucky home. I'm afraid I'm asking you to practise deceit, but I do hope you won't mind doing this. Of course if anything happens to me my people would like to see the letters, and there would be no reason why they shouldn't. I hope they won't be awfully fed-up at the dirty trick I'm playing on them—anyway I'm going to try and save them a lot of unnecessary and useless pain.

So I may as well tell you about the show. We got marching orders quite suddenly, though we've had an idea we were 'for it' for a long time. We bade farewell to all the friends in the town and marched out to a place where I was with the Artists for a long time. Stayed there for the night in splendid billets. Old Madame knew the Artists well, and had six billeted with her, and fairly threw her arms round me when I told her I'd been one. I got on most wonderfully well with her (and her two daughters!). I've never found my French run so well. The only drawback was that she would call me 'Mon Lieutenant' every other word, which palled after a bit.

We had a splendid time there, two nights and a day altogether, and got off again at five this morning. We've come about fifteen miles, which is a lot in full marching order when you've been in trenches for months, but I could double that without turning a hair as I am feeling remarkably elevated. It's now about three in the afternoon, and we got in here about twelve, since which we've eaten furiously, had a foot-and-rifle-inspection, and rested our aged bodies on what is left of a grassy pleasaunce in the middle of a copse, about half-way between the towns Gott-strafe-howitzers and

Wish-I'd-stayed-at-home—names characteristic of Flanders. In fact we're bivouacking here, about six or seven miles from the trenches, whither we may go any old time. We can hear the 8-inch Krupp clearing his throat for our speech of welcome.

Everyone seems to have gone to sleep except me, but I'm not tired a bit. To-night I think we shall have to ourselves in peace, with the sky over us—I hope it doesn't rain.

We've brought our shot-gun with us, furtively stowed away in the machine-gun limber, and hope to get some chances. There'll be shooting of some kind you may be sure, and I'm very ready for it whenever it comes.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

Support Trenches,  
June 7th.

Here we are in pretty primitive trenches with shells as thick as flies, and bullets darkening the sun! We marched out from our bivouac last night soon after dark, and came ten miles (with one five-minutes halt) at breakneck speed over all sorts of country. This is all very interesting; we came along the main road which goes through *the* town,<sup>1</sup> meeting all the motor ambulances coming back, a good analogy to the pig who, as he goes in at the top, winks cheerfully at the sausage issuing from the other end.

We skirted the town, however, just getting a glimpse of the place; there is not much left, I must say, but more than I'd thought. This is beautiful country, all little hills and valleys, but further south it is as flat as Fobbing. We heard the guns going pretty hard all the time, and when we got about 2,000 yards from the trenches the bullets began to come. And they fairly filled the air. I had two men down in no time and one through my own pack. Got

<sup>1</sup> Ypres.

the men dressed (neither was very bad), and followed on. By extraordinary luck no one else was hit, though the firing was like an attack, and we had to go in open order! Took over this old trench, which we've improved greatly already. We are on the extreme left of the British line, and next to us are a lot of Turcos. Pretty good, I think.

We've got 75's behind us, and I heard rather a funny story about them. One miserable rifle-grenade drops in our fire-trench. Up rushes the little French observing officer to his telephone: 'Camarade, camarade, le p'tit bombe'. Then bang-bang-bang-bang goes the battery for the next ten minutes! That's the way to wage war! I wish our guns had the scrap-iron to do this game; they are very decent about shelling what we want if they are allowed the ammunition, but they are limited pretty close. In this part of the world of course they do a lot of shooting, guns of all sorts and sizes going like hell day and night, especially the 9.2, which is some gun. When she hits a house the brick-dust hangs about for an hour or two in great clouds upwards of 100 feet high. That's all the house there is from that day forth.

We've got heaps of work to do in the way of digging communication trenches which will make all the difference. I've never before struck anything like the fire the ration-parties have to get through now. We'll soon alter that. Ours is *the* trench division, and we haven't much to learn about them nowadays. We were all amused when we found how these men were suffering nearly three times as much as they need if they had known more. That's one reason why this place has such a bad name, but there is no doubt that it really is pretty unhealthy, as we shall learn soon.

I'm most awfully fit and cheery. I've spent the morning fitting up my bombs and the afternoon fast asleep. I didn't get to bed last night, being woke up by the 11-inch howitzer



crumping away just on our left. The noise those things make coming is only less exhilarating than the noise they make when they stop, which simply deafens you and hits you in the wind. Nothing, however, can make my adopted countryman stop smiling, and I've got his philosophy right enough now.

\*

Supports,  
June 7th.

Here we are again. Came up last night, and the sniping on the roads was pretty thick. There's lots of shells flying round, but nothing has come near here, and this place has not had any yet at all, so we're careful not to call attention by fire. However, it is quite warm and there's lots to do, so we don't find that a hardship. This morning I've fitted up some fifty bombs, a long and dull job.

\*

Support Trenches,  
June 8th.

It is very hot and nice. We've been working all night at the trench, and have got it very good. We can dig pretty deep of course nowadays, without hitting water, and you may be sure we go down till it begins to get damp. We've got a parapet here about ten feet thick, which is about the best I've seen, and it would take a healthy shell to make much difference to it.

I got hold of a French bomb this morning, a wonderful thing that puts the wind up you even to look at it. It is a great iron ball with a comic loop attachment, which I believe you hook on to a thing on your wrist as you throw it, so that it lights automatically as it leaves your hand. Needless to say I didn't pull the loop to see if it did work that way. But

I did the next best thing ; I dug a deep hole, put it in, and covered it up.

I've just seen a characteristic French picture post-card, which one of the men is sending home. It shows an awful French civvy dressed up in a caricature of our uniform, with a French rifle (property at that), sitting on a mossy stone, or something on those lines, and turning up the whites of his eyes to a vision of an awful girl in the top corner. Across the top is the title IS DREAM ! They send any amount of this sort of thing home and obviously like it. Isn't it amazing ? They know what things are, and yet they'll send the most awful coloured fakes entitled *Frères d'armes* and that sort of thing, representing a Frenchman and an Englishman standing side by side up against a screen with a 'battlefield' painted on it, sometimes with a dead or dying, or at any rate humiliated, Allyman in the offing, probably with an Alsatian girl or else a Red Cross lady, and a few 75's (wooden). These things go back in stacks every day to Co. Cork, Co. Meath, Co. Kerry, and Co. Tipperary, and I suppose Biddy loves them. You get used to a good deal of rot on these things, but when they give the Englishman, besides leather equipment of a fantastic and original pattern, a pale yellow uniform cut like pyjamas, an amazing flat-topped head-dress, when they give him, I say, spats and patent leather boots with suède tops, well, it's time to reconsider our alliance, I say. *And* the boots have buttons !

To return to general topics (do you remember that ?) I don't want any more shirts, thank you. What I want really is things like sardines, tongue, or any interesting explosive in a metal case. The cream cheese you sent died on the journey.

That quotation from my works (unpublished) about the British soldier (so-called) is rather good !!<sup>1</sup> I take my hat off to Mr. Matheson and my charge is 10 gs.

<sup>1</sup> *National Ideals* : Oxford University Press.

That's awful funny about the Zeppelin drill at C's school, especially the 'two light meals'.

If you don't know them, find an opportunity of looking up some South Irish tunes, things like 'A Nation once again' and any of the light stuff like 'Come back to Erin', and 'The Mountains of Morne'. You'll be surprised how good they all are.

You wis askin' about my Iron Cross—all I know is that I was recommended for something, don't know which of them. It was for carrying some wounded machine-gunners out of a farm that was being shelled.<sup>1</sup> I think they all died, so it was a wash-out.

By Jove, this is splendid. It is hotter than most English summers, and the larks are singing away. I've heard the nightingale, though he was not in awfully good form, not going as strong as I am. I'm most amazin' fit and happy.

\*

Support Trenches,  
June 8th.

All going well, except the weather which is simply boiling. I'm now sitting in the coolest corner of a dug-out, but it is like an oven.

Last night I had a working party out for four hours under very heavy fire, but only got one man hit in the arm. He's half way home by now, I expect. There's a certain amount of shelling going on around us, and our guns seem to have come into money for once. If you've got any high explosive about you, you might send it in my next parcel. There's a good deal about here, to tell you the truth, and we have a very good local reserve all along the line. What we want is a big general reserve, and till we get that we can't

<sup>1</sup>See page 128.

use much. Our field gun H.E. shell is a very fine thing, more powerful than the German one (otherwise known as *Little Willie*). They wouldn't let us have any of them a little while ago, but now we get a few among the 'daily rounds' to supplement K's shrapnel.

I shall be sending home a comic photo soon of yours truly and a few low friends I picked up out here. They were to be finished last Sunday, so we may get them any old time now.

The captain of D Coy was hit yesterday by a shell, but he's not bad at all. He'll probably get back for a bit though. I'm glad the Skaifes didn't get bombed. It must be rotten seeing people hit when you're not used to it, but I've forgotten! I know that nothing could hit me as hard now as it would have a few months ago. I don't know if everyone has gotter motter in the same way. We work all night now and sleep in the mornings, which is a good way of doing things, as this is simply tropical. I've never in my life felt better and fresher than I do now. I do hope you are all going strong, and Father isn't being worried. Please all be well and happy.

\*

Support Trenches,  
June 9th.

It is not quite so hot this morning but hot enough to bake my legs (which protrude some yards out of my inadequate dug-out) before I woke up. It was just as well I did wake or my puttees would have been on fire. I've turned Hudson on to dig in a bit further, so that I can get the whole length inside.

I finished fitting up the bombs yesterday, and found an H. and P. biscuit tin to keep the fittings in. These are kept apart for the sake of safety till the last minute. It was too







hot to allow any grease to stop round the lid, so how do you think I did it? (It was rather brilliant!) I poured some bacon-fat round the inside of the lid, and then put it on and put the box away *upside down*, so that it would stop where it was put by the law of gravity, and keep out the wet. That is the sort of childish thing that amuses me. So if you'll come and look me up I can throw bombs at you, if you like, for your edification, at a moment's notice, and I'll guarantee that every one will burst. So do come!

We've done wonderful work on these trenches, though I say it. They were rotten when we came in, and now they're as good as any I know. I'm making all dug-outs on one pattern, bijou residences 6 ft. by 3 by 3, dug well below the ground till the water just doesn't come through, and roofed with an old door, or something of the kind, with earth on top of that. I've made rows of these little model villas on a regular plan like a new town, all laid out so as to get as many in as possible without cramping. It is a wonderful and cheering sight with a pair of boots showing at each dear little front door! We really have done a wonderful lot of work here, and left the trade-mark of A Coy on it. (They generally put A Coy into a rotten bit, and when we've made a job of it, relieve us, and next time put us into another rotten bit for us to re-build, until the whole battalion line is good, and A Coy can be relegated to the worst part of the second line to carry on, while B, C, and D, but especially C, make merry in our handiwork and get it ready for us to start on again.)

Our gunners have suddenly woke up and found that the German guns have been shelling hard ever since it got light. So they've fired three of Kitchener's shrapnel . . . that's better! there goes a real H.E. *and* it burst! What will Lloyd George say when he hears how we are wasting the shells he took such trouble to get?

There is a long straight road here running slick up to the trenches, and the bullets come down it like cars through Hammersmith on Saturday. Pearman was trying to get across, and every time he started, a taxi would whistle past, and he'd have to try for another gap in the traffic. It was awfully funny. He stood in the ditch and held his hand up in the true P.C. style, and then made a bolt for it and got there without being run over.

I found a copy of Omar Khayyam the other day; it belongs to Young, who always has it by him, though you wouldn't think he was taken that way. It is a wonderful thing to remember in odd places.

I'm sorry my letters are dull, but there is so little to tell you nowadays, except that I'm very well and chirpy.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

Support Trenches,

June 9th.

Things all going very well. Shelled yesterday with Jack Johnsons, and one B Company man has not been gathered up yet from the three fields over which he was distributed in very small pieces. Those are amazing shells.

Young had to go off this morning to a village a few miles back to be gassed. He (and a lot of staff men) were put in a trench and given a dose, with respirators on of course. They found the respirators worked admirably, though there were two unhappy frogs in the bottom of the trench who curled up and died at the first whiff.

The artillery is very thick behind our lines and theirs, but their guns shoot five times as much as ours, worse luck. I don't think the Allymans will ever get through here, unless they get some new frightful preparation for their offensive. We've a wonderful lot of troops and line after line of good entrenchment now.



[*Letter to a friend.*]Support Trenches,  
June 10th.

Last night I had a digging party out in the heaviest fire I've ever worked under at night. It was simply inexplicable that I had no one hit, as the bullets came along all the time two or three a second over the ground we were working on. One went through the baggy part of my Burberry and hit a man's spade just behind me. For three hours we worked there and then went in. When I was coming back, I got into an awful hornet's nest of bullets. They were smacking into the barbed wire posts all round me, and one whizzed under my nose, and went plop into a man twenty yards beyond me, just like an air-gun pellet on a starling.

These long-range bullets are most peculiar. The shape of the ground here is such that shots fired at our parapet skim the ground for nearly a thousand yards, as the slope just corresponds with the curve of the bullet ; so work behind the lines is unhealthy. Also they have rifles laid on the roads up to 2000 yards back, which they loose off continually during the night. These bullets which have travelled over 1000 yards can be heard coming for half a second or so ; but it's no good dodging. They have a peculiar whistle, and when they hit a man they make an extraordinary 'plop' of their own, which you can't mistake. Of course when a man is hit by a close shot, all you hear is a crack, and he goes down for no apparent reason, except that you hear the bullet going on with the sound of a rico—bzzz.

They are shelling the front trenches a bit now, and it will probably be our turn next. Can't say I mind it very much now. When other people get hit, it doesn't seem to apply to you at all after you've been through it a bit. You begin to think they'll never get you, when you see more and more men going, while you still remain like a sort of institution.

I've just thought it out, and there are only four of the company officers left in the battalion who were here when I came. My company has had all the luck, and since I've been here we've only lost two killed and one wounded, (and a few invalided). B company have had seven killed and wounded. My platoon has lost, I think, thirty-five men since I've been here, which is about the average.

I've arranged with the authorities not to get hit at all in this war, so I'll be home some day, and then we'll have a cheery time.

I hope you will find things still go with the swing they used to at School and elsewhere. It's splendid to have all that to look back on, and to look forward to again some time or other. If I get a 'jammy one' as it is called, I shall be back pretty soon, and that will be fine.

\*

Supports,  
June 10th.

Yesterday we were shelled with heavy stuff, and among others Will was badly hit, and buried in the remains of the parapet. He was got out and pulled up amazingly, talking cheerily while we tied him up. Then he walked back to the dressing-station, and that with a bit of shell in his head and one in his neck! Rather have lost anyone almost than that boy. He may be away six months and then be posted to the first battalion. He was about as near the ideal platoon officer as they make them; full of energy and pluck, with a splendid way with him that made his men be what they ought to be; always on the spot when there was anything doing, and never with the wind up. Though he's only been with us a month or two, he's done more than any of us, except Young, to make the company. The doctor says he's all right, but he'll have a rotten time yet.

Got to bed last night at dawn, about two o'clock. As a luxury I took my boots off, and put them outside the dug-out. When I woke up at half-past nine of course it had been pouring with rain, and they were full of water! (They are dry now and I've got them on). Had breakfast and went round the trench, and found everything as it should be. It's a good platoon that I have—sometimes. Since breakfast I've been reading the paper Father sent me (bless him) and then wrote this letter. It is now twelve o'clock and the C.O. has been round. . . . I always feel better when I've told you about things! Now then, that's enough! The trenches have got sloppy with the rain last night, but we'll soon have them cleared and dry again. As Taaffe once said to the general who remarked on the skill of one of our pipers in the trenches, 'Indeed, sorr, ye'd be surprised at the things we learn in the Linsters.' And you can't teach us much about keeping trenches in condition.

We've got a wonderful new respirator issued, a 'smoke helmet' made of cloth, like a cowl with a talc front, which is soaked in a solution, and then you can carry on in any old gas.

Talking of gas, that aviator man did stout work on the Zeppelin. It is a wonderful story, and I hope he's going to make a habit of it. He'd be useful at home, and deserves to go anyway. I wouldn't take a Boulogne-Folkestone ticket as a gift myself, as I feel things are going so well here, and it is all so very splendid.

\*

Support Trenches,  
June 11th.

Went to bed last night at eleven and was woke at two by rain such as I've never seen before. I was floated out of my dug-out on the tide, and found the trench a great brown torrent

some two feet deep in water. Got to work to run it off, but it was a heart-breaking job, with dug-outs collapsing in all directions, and the traverses falling in, undermined by the rush of water. My trench is the lowest in the Company, and I got all their water; so they were soon clear, but I found myself surveying a Venetian landscape from the top of the parapet. We've been at it ever since then, cutting a dyke through the parapet to try and induce the water to run off a bit. We've cleared all but one section, about 25 yards, but there's lots more to be done there. It is now eleven o'clock and I'm fairly dry, thanks to the manual labour. Poor old Young did not wake up till the water completely submerged him, so he got pretty humid, and he's had to go off to a court-martial this morning in his wet things. I hope he doesn't catch cold; we don't often do things like that now.

Thank God the Allymans didn't shell us while we were engaged in salvage operations. If they had, everyone was so fed up that they wouldn't have taken the trouble to save themselves, even if they had had somewhere to go, which they had not. Everything is right enough now and the place is drying up quickly, all except my one rotten bit. I'm sitting on a chair, yes, a real chair, in fact two chairs, because the ground is too wet to put down my feet with bedroom slippers on; they sound like items in Mars' stock-in-trade, don't they?

We've got a decentish dug-out, about 7 ft by 7, and 4 ft high, with a table in it and the afore-mentioned chairs, where we all feed together and indulge in social intercourse, and sleep each in his own rabbit-hutch. We do ourselves pretty decently, but it is not so luxurious as a little while ago. By the way, the big dug-out, where we entertained Adams, got a direct hit from a *White Hope* a few days after, and has not been seen since. No one was inside at the time.

The siphon you sent was not long for this world. In the first place it wouldn't work, the bulbs apparently not being



the right size, and then someone stole it, so we all wish him joy of the worm. I'm sorry you had the trouble. C. asked fondly after the cream-cheese which you sent me of your kindness. I thought I told you; it died on the way, apparently of measles.

I've got no puttees on, them being wet, and the flies keep tickling my legs. I've killed dozens of them, but there's always more, like Germans. I found the base of an 8-inch shell yesterday, weighing about 20 lbs., like a great iron discus. I'm glad it didn't hit me. I'd a party of four or five men working in front of my trench on draining dykes, under the impression that they could not be seen by any Allymans at all. Well, just as I wrote the word 'discus' there came a shrapnel, whiz-bang, slap on the place. They had finished the job not five minutes before, and come into the trench. There is another shell in the same place. All right, Allymans, peg away, you'll be wanting those some time. Their artillery observation is simply uncanny; and it was a good thing for us there was a hitch on the telephone somewhere. Our guns are really shooting a bit this morning.

\*

Supports, 7 p.m.,  
June 11th.

While the blissful incident is fresh in my mind I must write and tell you about it! Pearman and I went to a place where we observe from. Here a gunner subaltern lives at the end of a wire, with a few tame bombardiers, and spots for the field-gun battery. You get a glorious view of things for a long way round.

While we were there Pearman suddenly shouted 'There's some Allymans!' He was looking through glasses; and when I looked, there were sure enough three or four big fat

divils in grey, walking quietly along the side of one of their communication trenches, obviously to get out of the water. Huge excitement prevailed at our end of the telephone. 'Batt'ry ! is that you, batt'ry ?'

As the guns had fired their specified number of rounds for the day, we had to get through to those in high places, who graciously said 'Righto ; carry on.' By that time, of course, Fritz had made himself scarce ; but in a minute he came again, to the number of three, out of a quasi-farm. The artillery subaltern sent through a direction and very soon away behind came bang-zzzz and we all focussed on Fritz, now unconcernedly strolling along beside the trench, three of him ; puff ! came the smoke with the little wisp of flame in the middle, slap over the party, and down they all went in a heap, as the dear old pfut ! of the shrapnel-burst came drifting back to our ecstatic ears. Here's to K. and shrapnel shell ! And in a moment over came a second, which cut the water up high out of the trench, just where a man would have squatted at the first shell.

All this went on about a thousand yards from us, behind their second line, but we could see every shadow through our glasses, and it was as glorious a sight as I've ever had the luck to see . . . as pretty a bit of directed fire as you could wish for. That does a man's soul good who has seen his own men go down before German shells, without a chance of hitting back. And it gives you a great and healthy confidence in guns and gunners to see them perform conjuring tricks of that kind.

Have you sent us some H.E. at last, or what has happened ?

All the time I've been writing this, two hairy great howitzers of ours have been shaking the table with great hearty lyddite bursts on the trenches in front. I haven't heard our guns shell so much as if they liked it for ages !

It makes me feel quite happy, a pleasant change after the one-sided conversation (often lapsing into monologue) which we've been listening to lately.

Young has come back from his court-martial, having sentenced them all to death out of the kindness of his heart, and is even funnier than usual. Laville is funny too, a good fat lad with a humorous eye. I remain cheerfully offensive as always, except that it has grown on me, as a lot of things do in the trenches. Please send some Keating.

I bet you'd never think I had a rose-bud in my button-hole as I'm writing, but I have! It's all right, I picked it *myself* in a place where people don't come by the train-load to pick wild roses . . . to put it mildly. Most of the tree had been modified in type by being grafted with a Black Maria.

This is the second letter I've written to you to-day, and I hope you like reading them as much as I do writing them.

\*

Support Trenches,

June 13th.

We are getting a big dose of support trenches, as you see, but it is not all loafing by any means, as besides our own work, which is considerable, we have to send up working parties every night to the front trenches and elsewhere. Last night I did not go out, so we worked hard at our own place. It is very good now and quite dry.

Yesterday the air was crawling with aeroplanes, all being shelled. Our guns scuppered a Bosch, and he collapsed away behind. Then an Aviatik was cut off by two of ours. One hammered away at him with a machine gun, while the other annoyed him by making dabs at his nose. He got awful wind up, and tried to clear, but the little English

plane got in the way, while the big English plane was pushing it into him at 600 a minute. Suddenly he blew a cloud of smoke out of his exhaust, and up went his tail, and he began going down in spirals, the little Englishman following in case of accidents. He hit ground somewhere between the lines, just out of sight of us, and the little English plane went humming back, hell-for-leather, to get a policeman, I mean to get the guns on to it. Within a minute the field battery opened on it, and within five minutes it was on fire. Now there is nothing left. The pilot and observer were killed by rifle fire from our trench before the machine got to the ground.

Everything is going very well now, and there's a small chance of leave in a month or two!

\*

Support Trenches,  
June 14th.

Another lovely day, and I've just had a terrific shave and clean up. Last night I had a platoon and a half out trying to drain the water out of a flooded communication trench, and we certainly displaced a good deal by walking in it (up to our knees) but beyond what we brought away in our boots and puttees there was not much difference when we came away. But we worked very hard. In fact the only slack man in my platoon was having a rest, as he generally is, and a bullet got him through the hand and chin, which were characteristically together, supporting each other. He's not at all badly hit, and will get a good rest for very little unpleasantness. It was much too good for him, the sort of wound a good worker deserves to get! By profession (and no doubt preference) he was a tailor-man, who, till a little while ago has been doing special work at the transport,



mending clothes, and that right scurvily, for the brutal and licentious soldiers. Do you remember the fate of King Arthur's youngest son.<sup>1</sup> ὡς ἀπόλοιτο καὶ ἄλλος.

While my working party was out they shelled the support trench just behind us, which made me feel anxious, in case they might drop one 100 yards short. However, they showed most praiseworthy accuracy for night firing, and did not do more than put the wind up my party. You should have seen them ducking furiously as *Little Willie* whizzed overhead. We were all glad when they stopped.

Don't you think this is a good word . . . 'Ah thin look at Fitzpaathrick *skiting* around in thim civvy butes.' (That means splashing.)

I wish to goodness I could tell you one in a hundred of the Irish stories I've got, but they will have to wait till I can tell you privately (and with the correct intonation). Even then I shall have to keep in a lot of the best, among them many from the police courts of Dublin.

By the way, that Irish story in this week's *Punch* is excellent. And if you want *the* thing, by a man who's really here and understands, read 'The Watch-dogs' with an open mind every week. He's got it exactly, and all his details are beautifully true to life. It always make me howl with laughter. I've never seen anything before that was really convincing, and at the same time perfectly pleasing.

We've got yet another respirator dished out, which is the best of the lot, and can be adjusted in three seconds. It will be an awful pity, and everyone will be bitterly disappointed, if they don't gas us soon. What's the good of giving us all these things if we don't use them? You can simply laugh at the Bosch out of the inside of this new apparatus, and shoot him in the pit of his feldgrau. They say that round Wipers the German infantry is rotten, all mixed

<sup>1</sup> 'The Devil flew away with the little tailor boy.'

pickles with no heart in them, who won't advance if there is any fire to hold them up, that is, unless we're gassed out.

There is a cow here that walks about in the day, and by night is put away carefully in a dug-out, in the hope that one day she'll give some milk. So far there's nothing doing, and I'm afraid she'll be hit before she gets a sufficiently peaceful day to begin to think of what she can do for other people.

We spend a lot of time here strafing flies. There's rather a lot about, though our trench is as clean as a new sewer, really very nice. We seem to have made a difference to them already, and the majority seem to belong to Ersatz and Landwehr formations, the blue-bottles of the first line having all been accounted for.

\*

Support Trenches,  
June 15th.

Another glorious day, with a warm sun and a cool wind. Last night there was the devil of a bombardment half a mile or so from here, and we turned out in case there was a show. However, it gradually fizzled out, though while it lasted I couldn't get to sleep, which says a good deal for its intensity, as I've often slept like a babe while they shelled my own trench with 4.9 howitzers (high explosive).

There is one bit of trench still that has some water in it, so we have to go along the edge to get by. Yesterday I was strolling along the side of it as usual, when a number of bullets began going by (like cats sneezing). Secure in a consciousness of 1400 good English yards between me and the Allymans, I thought they must be stray shots, but I changed my mind after about twenty yards of it, when they began to come thick and fast round me. So I cut the performance short by a rapid sprint over the rest of the ground into B Coy's trench, where I found the men had been entering

into the spirit of the thing, and were still grinning widely. Apparently they were students of psychology, and noted the exact point at which officers who crossed there sacrificed dignity to security. The explanation is some beastly Allyman with a telescopic sight on a hill some 1400 yards off where he can command that bit of trench. He's not a bad shot, but he goes behind you nearly always as you walk (or run) across, especially if you run. Did some more work in the trench last night, but didn't take it too seriously.

I've got simply nothing to tell you, as things are really boring just now, and there's nothing to do but eat and sleep.

\*

Supports,  
June 16th.

Since two this morning there has been an attack somewhere in France; it started with the divil of a bombardment, and we made a demonstration here for our own amusement with guns and rifle fire, so that the Bosch in this part of the world should not feel out of it. The cannonading at the real place of attack was terrific and lasted several hours. We've taken the front line on a big frontage, and have gone pretty well in at two points. They are still getting along, and we get odd messages through on the telephone at intervals, giving the points reached, &c. I expect you will hear about this before my letter reaches you, but you know nothing at all about it yet! I can't say whether it is a big push or a local show, but I imagine it is the latter. However, my next letter may be from the Rhine district. You never know your luck, so don't be surprised at anything. I don't suppose we shall move till the foundations of the world let us down. It makes you very sick to hear things going on close to you, and to be unable to lend a hand. There have been thousands



of aeroplanes about these last few days, and we have seen some good shelling of them. You can't think how fascinating it is to watch the old aeroplane wiggling about in zigzags and the shrapnel trying to compete with it.

We've just got hold of the prospectus of the Expeditionary Force Canteen, which will send you anything you want in the food line amazingly cheap. It is a semi-official show, and really good business. I expect we'll get our mess catering done there, as it beats anything we've seen of the kind before.

I was up all last night as I had a working party from 9-30 till 1, and at two this awful row started, and we did our comic turn which made a terrible noise, so no one felt inclined to turn in till about 7 in the morning when things quieted down a bit, and we'd had a little good news of the push to go on with. I went to sleep about 8 and slept till 12, and here I am at about half past, feeling very fresh and cheery. By the way, we had breakfast at 3 in the middle of the pandemonium. We are going to have another meal very soon; here's hoping, any way.

Yesterday we saw some good shells. They began going for a church steeple about a mile behind the trenches, with very heavy stuff. The old shells churned through the air overhead, and you'd fix your glasses on the tower. Suddenly a yellow cloud leaped up three times as high as the tower itself . . . honest Injun . . . and after a bit there was the deuce of a crump. I've never seen any shells remotely approaching those for the height and volume of smoke cloud they throw up. I think they were the old 17-inch things, or they might have been the next size, which is 11-inch I believe. They got one hit on the church but it was on the extreme end of it, as it appeared, and the tower remained standing, though I bet it had a nasty jar. I am glad I was not transacting my devotions at the time.



There are two of our aeroplanes up now being duly shelled, and the bullets are dropping down all over the place. When air-craft shrapnel bursts over head, you hear a weird noise of all the odd things falling. The bullets hum like a hive of bees, and you hear the cap of the shell whistling down with some vigour. That would hurt you, but the spent bullet wouldn't seriously. By Jove, I picked up a shrapnel bullet and threw it at a blue-bottle sitting on the parapet about five yards off and got him pop! He never smiled again. That's one of the best shots I've ever done.

\*

June 17th.

All well. Lots of shelling, but not on us. Was out working again last night from 10 to 1, and I'm getting fed up with the particular job that we're always on. However, it is something to relieve the terrible boredom that prevails all the rest of the time. There is simply nothing to do and very little to think about. The programme is this: digging from 10 till 1, breakfast at 2 (because we aren't allowed fires in the day so as not to give the trench away to the Allymans, who know it perfectly well, and have registered their guns on it) 2-30 till 6 work on the trench. Then we sleep till about mid-day, and have lunch. Then boredom till dark, relieved by hopes of the mail, which we get about 10. I suppose you'd rather we were bored than had a show, but I'd prefer the other myself. Anyway we're all very fit.

\*

Supports,  
June 18th.

All well. Very hot again, and nothing doing. Work last night and even the sniping was slack! We are for it again to-night, I suppose. There's a lot of shelling, but it has not

come near us lately. Our Quartermaster-sergeant met a shell on the road, which wrecked his bicycle on him (also he was on the bicycle). A big chunk shattered the back wheel, and sent him flying into the ditch, where he remained for a bit to co-ordinate his opinions. However, he was not hurt, though he was only five yards from the old shell.

\*

Support Trenches,  
June 19th.

I was out working last night with sixty men in front of the firing line, making a new trench in standing corn, which hides it toppingly. When it's all finished we shall cut the corn and hand the hat round the German trenches. I hope they'll appreciate the performance.

It is peculiar country just there. The Germans are six or seven hundred yards away, and as nervous as kittens; they send up star lights continuously all night, which look very nice and all that, but must cost a lot of money. They didn't snipe us much and we were not troubled by shells. For three and a half hours we dug strenuously, and then returned in peace to our little home.

Yesterday we got shelled pretty hard with 'coal-boxes' which came in three at a time. They only got one hit on the parapet, and no one was hurt. They were all just in front or just behind the trench, and only succeeded in making a terrible noise. They fired shrapnel in between, a form of entertainment our gunners call 'mixed grill', high-explosive to bolt the rabbit, and shrapnel to do the rest. It was rather amusing, as we can always compete with their shrapnel by sitting close under the parapet. On the other hand, with high explosive you can never be quite sure where you are.

There is really amazingly little of any interest to tell

you. Nothing ever happens nowadays. Good. I've caught a big fly in a glass, and now he has been. The worst of these beastly support trenches is that there's no shooting to be had.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

June 20th.

Everything all right. I propose to write and tell you when anything happens that I can't tell my people, so, when you don't hear, the probability is that all is normal and fit for tender ears. There's nothing particularly rotten been happening these last few days. There was a false gas alarm last night. We spend all these nights digging hard at new trenches for other people. It is very boring work.

Very sorry about John Norman and Field. I should like some Dardanelles fighting for a change, and to get a little satisfaction. They've just burst four shrapnel on our trench, but hit no one. There go four more.

\*

Supports,

June 20th.

Very hot again and everything very nice. I was not out last night, though three platoons and a half went from the company. We've never before had such a terrific succession of digging parties, night after night. I hope they knock it off soon.

Dirty work by the Bosch this morning. One of our aeroplanes chased an Aviatik low over their lines, and finally punctured it with a machine gun. The German plane went down on a steep grade, over forinst their reserve trenches. But our old bus didn't have much time to enjoy the victory, as it was hit by rifle fire, and the petrol tank caught alight. The pilot man turned splendidly without losing control, and

came back sagging badly, and with a great yellow flame licking out behind his planes. He passed over us, and managed to carry on five hundred yards or so, when he did a nose dive and landed just out of sight. We got news of him on the telephone . . . pilot all right, observer with a leg broken, and the plane absolutely done in. So that was not so bad as it might be, and it was blood for blood. It was the same plane that settled the other Aviatik I told you about some days ago.

I have just seen an account in a letter written by one of my men of a scrap we had (in the limbo of his Irish imagination) been engaged in. It was quite thrilling! (Extraordinary thing that they never told me about it!). It was fine reading how we attacked the Germans, and captured five lines of trenches on them! [*sic*]

I have been reading *The Pools of Silence*; that's some book! I wonder if anyone has suggested that this is Belgium's divine retribution for some of the Congo business? It sounds rather a good theory, if you read that book and the Report of the Atrocities Commission together.

I am glad Wilfrid Adams has got to work. He seems to have got a pretty beastly corner, but he'll soon get used to that. There's nothing like a good smell to make you feel fit and anxious to take the German trenches, for what they are worth, on the chance that they won't smell quite as much as your own.

One of our guns fired a shot yesterday. Someone will be cashiered for that. I expect they were cleaning it, and it went off on them. Meanwhile the German guns never stop pounding away, day and night, always on to some target or other, whether it's the trenches or something away behind. That makes a man feel rather vicious sometimes. I hope to God there will be a change soon.



Supports,  
June 22nd.

Had a digging party out again last night, but it was particularly quiet, and we hardly had a shot at us. We began and practically finished a long bit of trench in three hours, which is good digging, as the ground was ideal. The Bosch tried to put the wind up us by firing coloured rockets all the time, especially green. Now I had a faint recollection of a certain document that I'd seen, giving the German signal code, 'Two green lights: We are going to attack!' But they must have altered it since then, as last night they certainly did nothing ungentlemanly.

Came in at about 1.30, and then went for a walk with Laville to inspect the country. Found among other things a 17-inch shell-hole, quite a cavity. It's about 10 feet deep and 40 feet across. Got inside and found it very difficult to get out again. We strolled over the country and had a good look at things from a hill. We found the aeroplane of ours that was brought down yesterday on fire. The framework only was left, all the planes having been burnt away. (They had removed the engine and the machine-gun previously to the aerodrome.) I took a bit of plane that was left, for a souvenir, which I enclose. Then we strolled back to the trench at about 3.30 and had breakfast. After that we went to bed, and slept the sleep of the just. I've just got up (it's about 11) and it's a lovely morning. I've every intention of getting the regimental ex-barber to cut my hair to-day, as it's getting terrible long. Young has had his done, and looks rather forlorn. By the way, I got fed up with Wilhelm the other day, and exterminated him root and branch. To do him justice, he hadn't done badly, and was getting quite ferocious. But I was so bored one day that I had to look round for something to grapple with to keep me fit. I didn't want to

lose him but I thought he'd better go. Every one thinks I look beastly without the garden hedge, so I've got something else to occupy my energies now, growing another!

Good news: I've found a rat in my trench, a palpable rat . . . not the sort you smell floating in the air, but a big pukka live brown rat, and he lives in the parapet, and comes out at night. I know that because I saw him, and when he saw me he went into the hole in the parapet, so that proves it, doesn't it? I'm going to try and mine his trench and blow him up with a hand grenade.

I'm sorry there's nothing interesting I can tell you, but everything is very nice, though there's little to do, and I've never felt better. If everything is all right I might see you in a month or so.

Very sorry about Field. He was another of the old mad crowd of prefects who dominated things the last two years, and made everything so very cheery in the School.

\*

Support Trenches,  
June 22nd.

All going well. Still hot and nice, but very cold last night. I wasn't out, so I went and hunted round for loot, but found nothing! Saw a Bosch aeroplane hit this morning by shrapnel, but she got off, going very wobbly. This morning the skipper cut my hair, and made a terrible hash of the job. You'll see what it's like when I get home unless kindly Nature has effaced the work of destruction. Wilhelm II has started these three days, and is getting on quite decently. Please say if you got the old platoon roll I sent in case it might interest you. Nothing doing at all. We are likely to be relieved in a short time. Cheero.

\*

Supports,  
June 23rd.

When I'd got as far as the date, a 6-inch shell went just over us and burst on an old farm behind. I don't think they're shooting at us, but I'll see where the next one goes, and tell you. It will be real stop-press news anyway, and I shan't be forestalled by the *Daily Mail* with the information . . . hooray! Two more into the farm!

To be quite frank with you, I got out of the dug-out quick, and squatted against the parapet till Uncle Jeremiah, as we call him, had gone over, as it is very hard, when a shell is coming straight at you, to say exactly where it will take it into its head to sit down. There's one more further away, about 60 yards.

I found a 6-inch 'dud' the other day, and was not surprised that it makes a noise. It stands as high as a very decent table, and looks like one of these strong silent fellows you read about. There's a wonderful lot of shells about this morning, some of them, to do Kitchener justice, English, but they're not being wasteful of them; just enough to show what we could do if we were at war. I hope the Germans are making a note of the fact that we do keep guns, and that they will go off. Just heard new orders that will put my leave off for a bit, but I should get it some time in the summer. The padre has just been in to see us. He's a glorious man; I believe I told you I'd met him in hospital. I've seen some photos of A Coy. in our old trench, and I think they are very good. I'm going to get a copy of one of them and send it on.

Yesterday I had my platoon out digging with Young. It rained all the time, and I had a man hit just as we were coming away—a nice little chap who's been out all the time. I hope he's all right.

However, things are very nice on the whole, and I'm well.

Supports,  
June 24th.

You might send a small bottle of 'No Germans'<sup>1</sup> or whatever it is, as there is a lad in B Coy who has got the dire disease rather badly. You should see him in his respirator, poor old dear. You can hear him miles away. C. has missed something anyway.

\*

Supports,  
June 24th.

Thank you awfully for the parcel which I've just got, with the magazines and the anti-bugcraft shells. They say the best shells we've got now are loaded with Keating, which has the Allyman kicking on his back in a few moments. Heard from — yesterday. He asked for information on the subject of trenches, so I fairly spread myself, with pictures and all completed. He said he thought he 'might get something intelligent' from me. And yit agin he might not! You never know your luck. However, I had pity on a poor home-soldier and told him a little, just enough to make him feel as if he knew something—and him in Hayling Island! If he tells his little friends all that, they'll feel very old soldiers, and say to each other, 'Oh yes, only a subaltern with a few months' service.' Then they come out here and explain to us that trenches are dug as a safeguard against hostile projectiles. I know 'em!

Perhaps you notice that I am feeling livelier than I have for some time. I don't feel so deadly dull now, partly owing to the mail. Anyway it was a very nice mail, and your parcel put the coping-stone on it. Thank you for the magazines; they are thrice-welcome nowadays.

<sup>1</sup> *No-Germo*, for hay fever.



Everything is all right here. I've heard that the man I had hit will probably get over it all right. Moreover we are due for a rest in a few days. But I'm afraid our dear old billet is a wash-out, and we shall be planted out in odd huts and fields round about the place. Anyway we've been in long enough; about three weeks now I suppose, which is a lot, with working parties every night, even though you get slack days.

Have you seen the discussion about cast-iron shells? Someone says that the Allymans are using them, and suggests that we shall; someone else says there are 'technical objections' to cast-iron. They are that the case is not tough enough to give a powerful burst, and the lifting force of the explosive is diminished. The Germans are throwing them at us now . . . Will was hit by one. The noise of the explosion is different somehow, and the action not the same. They don't rip into pieces in the same way as wrought iron H.E. shells, but splinter into thousands of tiny bits, among which of course there are a number of good big chunks flying around. They haven't got the destructive power over the trench that the old shell had, but they are likely to hit a lot of men if they drop in a bunch of them. I enclose a bit of a sand-bag which got dosed with splinters from one of these cast-iron shells. I've no objection to the use of this type on the Allymans. I think it would strafe them right! We've heard from Will in hospital in England, going on very well and perfectly happy. Thank God we'll have him back not so long hence.

Awful tragedy; I've lost my pipe that has been with me through the campaign and some time before that. Can you imagine me directing a digging party on a pitch-dark night, and glancing wistfully and hopelessly at the ground every time the Allymans sent up a star-light? If you could imagine it as it was, it would make you cry; it nearly made me. It was terribly pathetic, and raining!

That reminds me—did I ever tell you about Young when the Canadian sappers were with us, putting out some wire? He dropped his pipe, and must turn on a great electric torch and hunt until he found it. They had a good many shots at him, but he hunted away briskly in the grass till it turned up. But it had gone out. Thank God, he'd left his matches in the dug-out! Last night when it would have been pretty safe to use a flash lamp, of course I hadn't got one, mine having given up the ghost. Please send me another, the ordinary small size—I won't do Young's comic turn with it, swelp me. Bob I won't.

I've seen in the paper that Reeve, Bullen, and Marsland are mentioned. Marsland gets his mention for some good work in reconnoitring the new position before we advanced to take it. He stood and watched a German sentry at one of the houses, wondering if he would rush him, when no less than six Allymans came out; so he decided not to, and went back. He used to go out regularly, and the success of the show was mainly due to him. He is quite a nice thing, once Battn. sergeant-major, now full Lieut. in C company. He'll probably get a Military Cross or some plum of the kind as well.

Our guns had a German observation station on fire yesterday, and caught the men bolting out with shrapnel. They're good with shrapnel.

Good luck to every one—feeling much happier.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

Supports,  
June 24th.

Every night for four hours or so one walks about in a vortex of stray shots, which whiz round in every direction and hit things with a beastly stabbing noise. Some things you can easily get used to, but a dislike of this type of thing grows on you. I've had some amazingly near squeaks here, so perhaps

they're going to let me off this time. I'm not alone in my dislike of these long-range bullets, after three solid weeks of this futile life in support trenches, with no interest to take your mind off, as you have in the front line. We are going to have a few days' rest very soon, which will mean bivouacking in a large wet field, but out of range of most of the guns. There are some guns opposite us here! 6-inch, 8-inch, and 11-inch all do their best, which is pretty convincing. Just now they're shelling a farm 200 yards behind us with the 6-inch variety, which is good enough. They've fairly knocked hell out of it, but that doesn't matter as it's no good to us. Also it's raining!

There's some chance of leave for me in a month or two. I hope I get it, as I think it would do me good. I'm getting rather apathetic about things just now, as they're so dull. Sorry to grouse. I don't often feel like that, and I shall be better when I've had tea.

\*

Billets,  
June 26th.

Here we are in an excellent farm, way back out of range of most things. We came in after relief, and a terrible long march on straight pavé roads, while they threw shrapnel at us, but never got very near; though if we had been five minutes earlier or later we should have copped it. We marched from about 10-30 till about 2-30, and very hard work it was too, with a great heavy pack, after three weeks of sitting down. We aren't anywhere near our old billet, but out in the wilderness beyond, miles from everywhere.

There's a sort of quasi-barn for the men, and for us a kitchen with a very stone floor; but it was lovely turning in at 6 this morning after everything was fixed up. Slept like a log till eleven.



Do you see we've got a C.M.G., a D.S.O., and a Military Cross? That's very fine. Of course I'm washed out. The powers that be obviously didn't think I was worth anything, and honestly I agree with them. Anyway, old Murphy sent my name in, and that's good enough for me. It serves me jolly well right for telling you anything about it! I'm very sorry to disappoint you. I don't care a little bit myself, really.

The country is lovely here, almost like the worst parts of England. It is beautifully warm, and all the birds and things are going strong. We shall probably get a day or two's rest, and then go back to the digging.

Had a splendid wash and change this morning. There were more things in the ones I took off than are dreamt of in your philosophy. I've inspected my platoon, and everything is all right.

\*

Billets,

June 26th.

Thank you most awfully for the army corps of Woodbines. I've never in my life seen so many at one time; and the men will exchange their boots (and someone else's) for a packet of ten of these delicacies. You can't imagine what pleasure you've vouchsafed the B.E.F. There was an issue of the French commodity this morning; but to judge by the noises that followed the first instants of combustion it seems that the tobacco stores had amalgamated with a stink-bomb dépôt, and the makers had made a mistake over the material employed. On the outside of these terrible little packets is this epitaph: 'Offert par les Manufactures Bastos aux Glorieux Combattants de 1914-1915', which being translated means 'Offered by the Bastos Manure Factory to the poor Linsters', with the treacherous assurance that they 'ne sèchent pas la gorge',



don't cut your throat ; no, they leave that for you to do yourself afterwards.

[Wrapper of these cigarettes is enclosed. It is inscribed :

Manufactures de Tabacs et Cigares.

J. BASTOS

Fournisseur des Régies française et tunisienne

ORAN

Maison fondée en 1838, Usine à Vapeur,

Cigarettes aromatiques

ne séchant pas la gorge.]

But that's not the end of Mr Bastos' villainy. Not content with making things like that, he must drag in a native of Tunis, a poor black man, to take all the blame. He calls him 'O ran' (short for Orloso Ran) probably a junior partner, a Mr Jorkins. It appears that the poor Indian did his best, but hadn't a chance, as his untutored mind didn't grasp the danger in time, and though he ran too, true to his name, he couldn't run fast enough, and was asphyxiated just as he made the counting-house door. So Brother Bastos, who had provided himself with a respirator, survived to snaffle the profits, and inflict his hideous and noisome wares on an unsuspecting ally. *Nous sommes trahis ! Treacherous brute !*

But no one would mind that so much if he didn't glory in his foul crime. He commemorates his base violation of the Geneva Convention by the motto which each packet now bears, being the jeering words which he addressed to his swarthy but lamb-like partner just before the guile was revealed by creeping mist, as he tied securely the strings of his own nose-bag. 'You seen a vapour?' sez he. Ham junior had not, and said so. A moment later he was breathing his last in a dense yellow cloud.

Oh cut it out ! That just shows how French cigarettes  
cc

will affect a mind usually sane, but prone to morbid wanderings . . . Now then, that's enough! Pass along there, pass along!

Thank you very much for the enlarged photographs of Kenneth. I'm very glad to have those two, as I remember them so well. I've got quite a decent number of nice photographs, human various, nowadays. They live in my pay-book that was, and come out regularly to be inspected and meditated on.

Bullen and Daly have gone home on leave to-day; they went off mid-day, and get there this evening some time. They are only getting four days, but didn't seem depressed about going, either of them. Bullen got his D.S.O. mainly for the show the battalion had in October when they were advancing. We got furthest east of any British troops, but were driven back off a ridge that we have since been contemplating from our trenches for all these months, behind which the German howitzers sit up and take notice. There's only Bullen, Murphy the adjutant, Daly, and Young left now of the officers who were there; oh yes, and Macartney, who got his Military Cross there for a large bag of Saxons he made with his M.-G's mounted in the open, while he covered a gap in the line till we got back. I wish I'd been there! By the way, our new padre Maloney has got a Military Cross this batch, for work he did just after Mons, when he was with some other regiment. He's a great man.

This is a very nice billet after the trenches we've been in, but nothing approaching the comfort, nay, luxury of our old place. It is lovely being out of range of things and in really good country for a bit, where the houses are whole (mostly) and there's cattle and chickens all alive and walking about the fields. No smell of Allyman anywhere.

I'm glad you've heard from Clarke. His news will be awfully obsolete though, as I can hardly remember the time

when he was with us, and things have altered very, very much, and such a lot of things have happened. You live a great deal in a short time in this country, I suppose. Glad you liked my shell pictures. I'll have some photographs of me and other odd things to send in a few days.

Young has gone looting on the chance of finding any unconsidered trifles that there may be lying about. I prefer to stop in and write to you, because I like telling you about things.

\*

Billets,  
June 28th.

I've got something to think about at last, a real good new interest. They are going to make me machine-gun officer when Macartney goes to the R.F.C., so now I'm working with him and the M.-G. sergeant, Bennett, who is the most remarkable man I've ever struck—to prepare me for it. I went down to-day for the first time, and went through all the drill with the gun-teams. I found that after about one go I was pretty well as good as any of them, as all the stuff I learnt at St. Omer came back with a rush.

I went through the workings of 'indirect fire' with Mac, which is a most attractive business. Please will you send me a prismatic compass and a small protractor to work angles with? Oh, mother! that it should come to this! I'm going to justify my redemption from Smalls by doing some geometry on my own, and simply because I want to! This is called Justification by Works.

In the meantime I have to carry on with most of my ordinary work in the company, so there's plenty to do. I've never before been so glad to get busy. Lucky I kept my 'Machine-gunner's handbook'.



Did I tell you we'd shifted our quarters again? We are now in a very fine house, which was once a brigade H.-Q.—Young, Prendergast, and I, while the other two are about half a mile away. Our two platoons are here with us in a big hut, and the other two are in similar quarters near where the other two officers are stopping. All the companies are round about the neighbourhood. We sleep on the floor, but we've got some straw, and it's beautifully comfy.

Went into the town yesterday afternoon with Young, and had a 'ramsammy' at the transport with a lot of kindred spirits. It was a very cheery show, and we tore ourselves away from there just in time to be late for dinner.

Laville has just come in after seeing our biggest howitzer, appalled! He's like the Queen of Sheba. I must go and see her (not the royal lady, but the howitzer) as soon as I can get away. I'm working at M.-G. business all the time now, and enjoying it all terrifically. They're giving me some grenades to do practices with.

Please send some 'John Cotton'. S.O.S.

\*

Billets,  
June 29th.

Everything going quite as it should. I've lately made the acquaintance of a great character here, the machine-gunners' goat. She's a most extraordinary beast, and has taken to M.-G. tactics in a wonderful way. She *will* fall in with the gun-teams; you can pull her away by main force, but she comes back at the double. She gets awfully excited at the command 'Action', and helps the gunners by running between their legs, and standing where they want to mount the gun; she's never more than a yard out at most. When the guns are mounted she stands in front and licks their



noses lovingly—an unwise thing to do with a friend of such habits. But we're all very fond of her, and the gunners have adopted her entirely; and she now bears the mystic sign M.-G. on the side of her, in emerald-green paint.

Things are none too exciting even now, but the weather is glorious, so I'm not grouching. I've got a few bombs to practise with to-day, so I'm having the grenadiers out this afternoon.

Leave has jumped nearer again, but don't tell any one!

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

Billets,

June 30th.

Things are going on all right, and life is not unpleasantly dull. I've been doing a lot of bomb-throwing lately, and training fresh squads of grenadiers on a system I invented myself.<sup>1</sup> We've got a new bomb that will soon be issued which is twice as handy to manipulate in a hurry. I can't tell you about this little chap in case the Germans capture our mail-bag, but if they don't know the bomb I am referring to by now, they never will; and it's no good explaining it to them again.

Talking of explosives, the German shells are a nuisance. They have a way of bursting high-explosive with a time-fuse over the trenches, which is very unpleasant, especially with the cast-iron case. They killed a great friend of mine with one of those a little time ago. I can give you an idea of the virtues of any particular type you're interested in. Not that I know much more about shells than the rabbit does about shot-cartridges.

I can't place the boy you mention, unless he was in C. club. If so, he must have more in him than I thought; he used to play three-quarter, not well but too wisely.

<sup>1</sup>See pp. 199-200.

Everything is slack for the moment, but I may tell you we are going to a pretty unhealthy place in a few days. I shall probably have something to tell you then. In the meantime, Goodbye.

\*

Billets,  
June 30th.

Everything all right. Did some more M.-G. this morning, and this afternoon I'm doing some more bomb-throwing, and the C.O. is coming to see (Oh). I've not heard from any of you for two days, and I'm hoping for a decent mail to-day. It's very hot indeed, but the country is beautiful and smells splendid. I've just met another Pauline I used to know ; he's Brigade signalling officer. That's a particularly cosy job, as he lives at Brigade H.-Q. and does nothing, as far as I can see, beyond living like a Sybarite with the Brigadier. I'm applying for something of the kind.

\*

Billets,  
June 30th.

I'm always most awfully glad to get your letters and glad of a chance to send back a few words to you in particular.

I'm so glad you've got my platoon roll safe and sound. I suppose it must be a really interesting document. I'm afraid it won't be much of a thing to stimulate recruiting, unless the potential recruits are tougher nuts than most. They generally try to keep the aspect on which *that* lays stress rather in the background, until it comes out of its own accord. (That's rather a good mixed metaphor ; but I forgot for the moment that I was a scholar.)

I'm glad you saw some Allyman prisoners. What strikes me chiefly about them is the repulsive *redness* of their fat

faces when they do stick them over the trench. But I'm not grouching, as it makes a good background for your sight; and then they vanish.

In reply to your sad little P.S. I should be delighted to write with a hard black pencil if I had one. *If* I had one. Please send a few pencils that really will write, as I'm badly off for them. The length of this one I'm writing with is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

Everything here is all right, if dull. I've spent the day at the machine-gun and bombs.

\*

Billets,  
July 1st.

Things here proceed at the rate of twelve hours a day. I've been carrying on with M.-G. work, and this morning I rose in my majesty and drilled the gun-teams within an inch of their lives. I caught them out times without number, which pleased me immensely.

This afternoon I went to Brigade H.-Q. to see a Pauline I met the other day, a science man, who was one of my first crowd of prefects. He's now Divisional Signalling Officer and no end of a nut. It's rather amusing to think that we learnt to slope arms together at the School in August, and that the demi-gods who taught us have been getting commissions in K's army, with a hope of coming out before 1920. Fortune has played odd games with us. There shall be two recruits drilling at the School: one shall be taken and the other left. Then . . . there shall be two men sitting in a trench, and ditto ditto.

I don't believe I've told you about my bomb game. I've been training squads of grenadiers hard, lately, on a system of my own. The most popular part of the course is this:

Take sixteen jam tins and fill them with stiff clay, to do

duty as dummy bombs, which they closely resemble. Take a bit of breastwork some fifty yards long, and place at each end two men with four bombs apiece. Then climb on the parapet and blow a whistle for them to start ; and they nip along the trench towards each other, round traverses and along the straight bits, looking out for a chance to bomb the other fellows. Suddenly someone gets a glimpse and takes a shy, to drop his bomb on the enemy. From this develops a free fight, jam tins flying in all directions, till I give one party out of action. The men love this enthusiastically, and you should hear the yells of delight that follow a direct hit. As training I think it couldn't easily be beaten. Some of the men are wonderful shots, and I had a case of one party being neatly exterminated by a long shot as soon as the whistle blew. The 'happy warrior' who did the deed is in my platoon, one Finlay, and his hair is red.

In case of further misunderstanding, let me assure you that the sardines did arrive, but they were dead in their tin, and someone had eaten their heads.

We are likely to go up in a few days ; and between ourselves leave is not only a remote possibility. I shall get it, if nothing happens, within quite a small number of weeks.

Poor old Jim<sup>1</sup> must be 'fed-up'. Please thank him for asking after me, and tell him I've just had my inside jolted out in a lorry full of high explosive shells, so I know we've got a few to come. If you think it would annoy the German authorities just remind him from me that we aren't down-hearted in the least.

\*

Billets,  
July 2nd.

Things are going on much as usual. This morning I was going down to the M.G. place and I met Mac on a horse

<sup>1</sup>A prisoner in Germany since September, 1914.



going to the range. So we inserted the gee in a stable, and caught an A.S.C. lorry running in the required direction. We found the range, which by a whim of its originator, is rather closer to the trenches than usual for such peaceful proceedings as testing machine-guns. However, we got to work ; the four guns were working perfectly. Then we packed up and had another joy-ride home. I tried an interesting experiment while we were on the range. Finding a bully-beef chalice brimming with beaded bubbles and the other things you find inside, I put it up and fired ten rounds rapid at it with a rifle. Every single bullet penetrated the fibrous wad, much to everyone's astonishment.

I'm still in mourning for the loss of my pipe, the only pipe in the world I ever loved. However, the one you sent is very nearly educated now, so I'm beginning to cheer up.

There are a number of misguided peasants about here who know nothing but Vlaemish. Hence many tears the other day. I took some men out to train as grenadiers, and found an old man in possession of the ground we'd selected. In ten languages I told him 'Go away : we are going to throw bombs'. But he only stood and smoked his absurd pipe and smiled at us in a fatherly way. All the things I could think of to say only sufficed to make him settle down to enjoy the afternoon, chuckling delightedly at my wild excursions into the fourth dimension. Suddenly I had a brain-wave. I ran at him with a loud roar : 'BOM!' sez I, and threw one at him, (minus the detonator). He was three fields (and two dykes) away before I was ready to proceed with the instruction. The thing to have said originally would have been something in this form : 'Gej ab : wie willen bombje woerfen', or something equally exhilarating. N.B. I take no responsibility for above cryptogram.

Just got the mail, and with it in came a lad called Stopford whom I used to know well at School, a great friend

of Kenneth's. He's now working with some Quaker ambulance, and has been out since November. Had a very pleasant talk with him and then he had to go.

There's a terrible quantity of flies about here, which we strafe in large numbers. Could you send me some means of competing with the savage brutes? Anything but the stuff they've got at Burnt Hill which was seen to have scored three. It transpired later that they had been forcibly introduced by Nellie 'to see if it was any good of'.

\*

Fire Trench,  
July 4th.

Well, everyone! Here we are again in advanced trenches, where we haven't been for ages. At last we've got something to think about. We marched out last night a weary way over pavé roads, and then across country through smells equally solid and exhausting. But we all got here, and took over these trenches, where we haven't been before. They're pretty good and a very reasonable distance from the other fellows,—the wire is quite excellent. I went out last night and had a good look round. My only misadventure was to put my hand on a poor old Allyman in the grass, who'd been there rather longer than was desirable in the circumstances! I put out a post of six men and a N.C.O. in a disused trench 'beyond our wire', and went home with a light heart. Everything is quite all right after the relief, and we've made ourselves very much at home. What our men don't know about settling down in odd places isn't worth learning. The H.E. seems to be rolling in at last. Our guns have done quite as much shooting as the Dutchmen this morning, and that's a good deal. Luckily for us nearly all the shells were non-stops, destined for our batteries

and odd buildings they've got a down on in the rear. No one minds those; and when they turn on the 11-inch howitzer we all turn out and cheer. You've never seen anything like the cloud some of those shells make—11-inch and 17-inch. It's indescribable. When they're shelling a church the creamy yellow cloud leaps twice as high as the steeple in a fraction of a second as the shell explodes. The yellow muck doesn't choke you, though, like the black greasy smoke (T.N.T.) which they generally have in the 6 and 8-inch shells. That's like a few dozen chimneys on fire, and makes you all smutty. The powers that be— seem to have raked out a few claimants for leave ahead of me, running on a peculiar principle of their own, which my poor brain can't fathom. But I'm still in the running, very much so, and am pretty sure to get it within a month or so. I'm afraid I've been thoughtless in telling you all the fluctuations of my hopes as they came along, but each time I think it really is final. I express no opinion now, but just pray vigorously. I can hardly miss the thing, but as you and I once found out, fortune is a blind and hopeless old beast.<sup>1</sup> I'm very sorry if I've kept you in unhappiness all the time. Won't do it again! It's strafing hot to-day even sitting in the dug-out. The flies are the devil. Please send me some fly-papers, the sort you unroll and hang up. We've got one in action now and it's doing terrible execution.

I've got news you'll like. I'm going out of the trenches to-morrow for a machine-gun stunt (my third—ought to begin to learn something soon.) It will be back out of things, worse luck, and I shall be bored as stiff as I was at St. Omer in the prehistoric days. Well, there's nothing more I can tell you except that the war is still going on apparently quite well.

\*

<sup>1</sup> τυφλόν τε καὶ δύστηνόν ἐστιν ἡτυχία—in an early Greek lesson.



[*Letter to a friend.*]

Fire Trench (at last),  
July 4th.

We relieved last night, coming through a district where they'd been using gas-shells. Then it was beastly, as your eyes sting horribly, and you feel as if someone had you by the throat. There was nearly a mile of it altogether. We all arrived right enough and took over our trench; it is a decent place, but with very few dug-outs of any use. It seems to be quite a cosy little corner, though the people we took over from had wind up to their eyebrows. One's sorry for people like that. It takes a real mix-up to make our men take things seriously, beyond the ordinary state of readiness for anything that happens, which manifests itself in sound and untroubled slumbers.

This place is about three miles from the last trenches we were in, and just close to the part where there's been a certain liveliness going on lately. There will probably be some more very soon, but I shall be out of it, worse luck, as I'm going back for about a fortnight to do machine-gun work, but not so far as to be out of anything serious. I start this business to-morrow, so I shan't have long to stretch my legs and enjoy life in this advanced trench, which is the only place where things are not beastly boring. It is some time since we've been in the front line, and going up is like going home.

The town is a wonderful place. Long rows of houses less than six feet high, with piles of bricks all over the place. There are some unhealthy spots, 'Suicide Corner', 'Dead-man's Alley' and others, where they drop shells regularly, trying to catch our transport at night. We call it the 'Evening Hate'.



Fire Trench,  
July 5th.

Things jog along. I am just going back with Hudson to get on with the M.-G. course. Last night there was a bit of an alarm, but it blew over. Went and had a look round outside. There's a lot of shelling always going on nowadays but we get very little sniping as the Deutschers are working all night as we are. However, having turned in about two, I was woke up about six by the Germans firing down our trench obliquely, which was rude. I crawled out and sat just outside my dug-out, waking up, and listening to the band, till I obstructed a spent ricochet with the back of my head. That made me angry; but, as it hit in a particularly bosky bit that Prendergast had forgotten, the damage done was confined to externals and manifested itself in a bump. The bullet bounced off, and I picked it up. I'll send it along some-time.

The people on our right caught a Mothers' meeting of some forty Allymans walking along behind their trench this morning, and got a M.-G. well into them; they think they stopped about half, which is good enough. If they make me Pukka M.-G. officer I shall probably mess with H.-Q., but I may still stay with the Coy. if I want to. I shall have two sections of twelve men and two guns each.

I'll have to stop now as we're going to feed and then I'm off.

\*

Billets,  
July 6th.

I left the trenches yesterday about 2 after a sad farewell, and proceeded to trek back with Hudson and my things. I picked up rather a nice shell cartridge which I'm going to try and

send (perhaps bring) home to you. Half way back I ran into another man going on the same errand as myself, so we joined forces and captured a motor-ambulance which joy-riders us back here. Found the billet we've got, a very good place, dropped our cag here, and went out to tea ; then we reported at a brigade H.Q. and got our instructions, which rather winded those of us who expected a good loaf. We start every morning at 7, and carry on with intervals few, far-between, and, in respect of duration, modest, till 4 in the afternoon. That is the end, so it won't be so bad. I shall be able to carouse with our transport people a bit and some A.S.C. men I know. The first morning we were let down easy ; starting at 9. We've just knocked off, 3 o'clock.

The work was stuff I knew on my head, and we've got a very excellent M.-G. sergeant from the Royal Fusiliers bossing our crowd. This is funny. After months of independent administration of a polity including many sergeants, months of free active service, back we come to be schoolboys, and be run by a sergeant ! In a way it's rotten. One misses the responsibility more than any other adjunct of commissioned rank. This makes you feel so small and *private* ; to such an extent does the individual status become a part of the order of things. Without it there is something badly missing, and old, unhappy, far-off things are recalled when one did not count ! However, I expect that feeling will pass off, and I'm sure the old order of life will come back.

Woke up feeling very cheery this morning and had a bath in the garden. Since then I've had breakfast, worked, lunched, worked, and had tea, conscious of a day's work done.

There's a funny old man who owns this house, and we have to stroke him the right way at every opportunity, or he'd take away all the furniture which he's letting us use. There are some cherries in the garden which we particularly mustn't touch. They're very good.

I expect we shall soon begin to appreciate freedom from responsibility and feel young again, but at present it's rather like spillikins after rugger, maths. after classics. It's a great thing to be able to enjoy spillikins, but when you've learnt the other game they lose some of their engrossing charm and all their glamour. But after all, the more games you can play with interest the better man you are and the more perfect.

I've just seen that one Desbrisay Blundell Mein has an M.C. Does that name conceal Desby, as I've always spelt him? If it does, please congratulate Mrs. Mein from me most heartily. I'm awfully glad. If not, we'll say no more about it.

Well, for a bit, Goodbye, dears. It will be rugger again soon, and it will be nice to stretch my legs after this. In the meantime I'm quite content, and I'm sure you are.

\*

Billets,  
July 8th.

The work goes on, as work will if you're not firm with it. It's the same old stuff, but we're doing it all very thoroughly and with a view to instructing ourselves in the future—a business which is particularly difficult with this particular bag of tricks, that is, if you've not been educated to things of the kind, as I haven't. However, I shall be able to carry on well enough.

It's rather a strain getting to work at 7, but no doubt it's very healthy, and certainly lengthens the day, which may or may not be an advantage. But 4 is not so late to knock off, and you can get plenty of relaxation in after that.

I believe Young is going to try for the R.F.C. with Mac, and I'm going to be M.-G. Officer; so the old crowd has vanished into air, into thin air. This is not without pathos. Men were giants in the old days.



So spake he grouching, but anon began to feel better. Then he sharpened his pencil and proceeded.

I met Monaghan this morning, just back from leave. He says London is glorious, and what he told me about it sounded so interesting, and he told it so well, that I almost fancied I'd been there once and had seen the things he told me about.

Our mess here is running very well, and we are not doing ourselves at all badly. It's all very comfy.

It's raining peacefully to-day, but it makes no difference to me as I've got tiles to go under.

\*

Billets,  
July 9th.

Everything as ever. Same old round with the silly old gun goes on; and yet before all this I knew enough to wipe three Allymans with an M.-G. outside their trench on a misty morning. I expect I told you about that at the time—it was some months ago. (I remember, I remember, the trench where I was—no I wasn't.)

I got one of the watches to-day. Young's of course! Thank you very much. I shall be glad to get my own back too. I also got the summer number of *Punch*, thank you; it's got some good things.

It's long days we're doing, and them pretty strenuous. But after the work was over to-day I met Ducat again, and he and I and a Buffs' man went and had a cheery tea.

I've made a bunderbust for a bath to-morrow if my heart doesn't fail me at the last moment.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

July 10th.

Thank you awfully for the *Flie-gefangen*, as we call them here. I shall do great execution when I get back to the



trenches. In the meantime, as you may have heard, I'm back in the town of Blank, some ten miles west of *the* town, doing machine-gun work, with a view to taking over the Battalion guns. This is likely to go on, battles excepted, for another ten days or so, and is not so bad as a rest-cure.

Yesterday they shelled pretty close to us, as they do regularly, with big shells apparently from an armoured train or some other naval gun. No howitzer shell could have come in as fast at this range. Very little damage was done.

This town is a pretty civilised spot, though a good many people have bolted. Most of the shops, such as they are, are open, and you can buy anything you're likely to need.

\*

Billets,  
July 12th.

We're still round the same old place, though we've altered frontage a bit, and taken over bits that were held before by people on our flanks. The town I'm in is the old home of my youth.

There's nothing to tell you about this business except that to-day we beat the standard test for the handling of the gun in action. This evening I went and had some revolver shooting; and to-night we've got a dinner, followed by a comic court-martial in which I'm prosecuting on various heads! This is really very nice, and I've nothing to grouse at.

By the way, if I'm M.G.O. I shall have to ride a gee!

\*

Billets,  
July 13th.

I've just met Macartney in the town, back from leave, and he tells me Young was frappé last night, shrapnel through the shoulder. He's all right, I believe, and will probably have

long and joyous leave, but there are few things I less wanted. God help the company! One captain of a month's war-service, one subaltern of three weeks' ditto, and then there's me. Men may come and men may go, but I'm one of the fixtures and belong to the landlord. I seem destined to overlap and see my friends out every time. If I go back to the company things will be strange and shallow for a bit anyway. It's good luck I've got odd jobs like training bomb-throwers to make life interesting and worth while.

This is all right here. We had a dinner last night which was a fine show, and may account for my state of mind this morning, as shown in previous paragraph. In any case things will very soon begin to look cheery, as they always do. I am very sick about Young but I'm not down-hearted.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

Billets,  
July 14th.

The other day an advanced post of ours in a farm (twenty men and an officer) was very heavily shelled and had orders to retire. The Allymans took over the place. A D Company officer with two sections counter-attacked, and drove them out of it, incidentally killing twelve with the bayonet. So that was all right. But it makes me sick back here. A very great friend of mine, Young, was hit the day before yesterday, and has gone home. Since then two more of our officers have been slightly wounded. There's now one officer in the companies who was here when I came. Thirty odd have gone West in one way or the other.

Things here are very nice, but it will be good getting back to work.

\*

Billets,  
July 14th.

We've had two more officers wounded slightly, O'Brien and Palmer ; neither of them bad however, both 'jammy' ones that will be worth a good bit of leave. I've heard about Young's effort. He got a shrapnel bullet nicely through the shoulder, and insisted on walking round the line to say good-bye to everyone before starting to the dressing station. There was no despondency there. He'll get a good holiday, which he's earned if anyone ever did.<sup>1</sup>

These doings affect my leave a bit. Young was due to go with Murphy, but it was too late to get anyone else in his place, and M. went alone. However, O'Brien's show removes one claimant, so it's an ill wind that blows nobody home. I don't see how they can put me off beyond the beginning of next month. But that remains to be seen.

Yesterday I went to our transport lines and had dinner with Ducat, who is doing Transport Officer nowadays. He's one of the people I'm glad we've still got.

I haven't heard any more of those photographs for some time, but they're bound to turn up pretty soon. Thank you very much for my watch, which I got yesterday. It's going like blazes now, and the hands fairly shine in the dark.

Did I thank you for the fly-papers ? They're splendid, and so are the rest of the things in the parcel.

Please thank Father very much for arranging about the watches, and for his dear letters.

M. G. Supplement.

Ask C. what is the 'Immediate action' for a 'number three' ! If she knows that, ask her the nine different causes that may set up the said stoppage.

<sup>1</sup> Died July 25th.

Billets,  
July 16th.

We went down to the range to-day, and I did rather decently. Before we started, the belts were faked to give many and wondrous jams in the gun, but I thwarted mine pretty quick, and fairly discouraged the targets.

To-morrow the gin'ril is coming to see us in our natural surroundings, i.e., oil and steel springs. I hope he'll like it, and doesn't want to know more than is good for him.

This business ends on the 20th, and then our people will be out of the trenches probably.

If Kit got 80 per cent. in maths. he's no true son of mine; but that doesn't matter as long as he gets in, as he certainly ought to on that showing.

We were going to have a great rifle competition, but it's raining now, so I'm not going for one, even if the show does come off, which I doubt.

They've obused us most days in here, but they can't hit me at all, so I've told them they may as well leave off trying, because it's silly.

One day is just like all the rest but it's nice enough.

\*

[*Letter to a friend.*]

Billets,  
July 17th.

Your fly-papers have done great execution. When you're shoved away back behind the lines you have to kill something, and without the cheering sight of those papers in action it would be hard to get along from day to day. I've got all sorts of bug-killers, but I've not been molested since I've had them, so I can't report on their efficacy. I'll let you have a communiqué as soon as we come to grips with the enemy.



If I do get leave I'm afraid the School will have gone down, so I shan't be able to come and do the heavy. This beastly course ends in a few days, and after one more go in the trenches I may see you. I'm going to be particularly cautious this time, and take no chances.

\*

Billets,  
July 17th.

If you don't know already you'll like to know how Kenneth was killed, as I heard yesterday. He went up on May 1st, and next day reconnoitring for his gun positions he was hit in the neck. He died the same evening on board a hospital ship, and was buried at sea. It's a great ending.

All this goes on as usual, and we shall be through it in three days. The general didn't come to see us to-day, but I did very well on the range this morning.

\*

Billets,  
July 18th.

We had a lot more M.-G. shooting to-day, also a great rifle competition in which my squad was victorious. The best targets we had were empty cartridge cases set up in a row at 9-inch intervals at 25 yards, to be dealt with in quick succession with rapid fire. If you hit one it was never seen again; though in one exceptional case, after I had unloaded, a belated cartridge case was heard to roll down the tiles of a roof some 50 yards away.

There has been a lot of wind up lately round about here, but it seems to have come to nothing. We've got two guns to every square inch, and every other gun, I believe, has got a shell in the limber for use in emergencies. When

they throw one, they are given another with the warning that if they are convicted again of wastefulness they'll get half as much, without the option of a fine.

I don't think they can put off my leave beyond the end of the month. I think a day in London, and then Westward Ho! would meet the case. I shan't be so wistful about food this time, as you see I've lived a pretty luxurious life compared with the first phase of the war.

I'm very well and particularly satisfied with the present and the future; ready for any old thing. Saw the deuce of a rat this morning.

\*

July 19th.

All going well. Did a lot more shooting on the range and visited by the general. He seemed pensive! I really ought to get off within a fortnight, so I give you fair warning.

This show finishes to-morrow, and we rejoin. It will be good to get back, even with a gap in the mess.

\*

July 19th.

I've got two bits of news. One of which you'll be pleased to hear and the other perhaps not. I've been made Battalion Bomb Officer with a command of some 140 dangerous criminals besides my own platoon. I'm awfully glad to get this job, as I love training men for the game. The second bit of news is not so exciting. I shall arrive in London on the morning of the 26th inst., but that won't interest you! What I really want to tell you is that the M.-G. school has broken up, and I'm now back with the battalion (in huts in a wood).

\*

Bivouac,  
July 23rd.

Don't you think it's rather nice about the 26th? It seems too good to be true, but it's true all right. I shall get in to Victoria at 5 a.m. on the Monday, so don't fash to get up; but if I may, I'll come and have breakfast at your house. May I?

I should like to go down to Burnt Hill on Tuesday; I hope the School has not broken up, but I suppose it must have.

I'm afraid I've got no decent souvenirs to bring, except two 18 pr. shell cases which I picked up and retained in a moment of enthusiasm. If I could bring home half the things I've picked up and thrown away, there would be some excitement (also much alarm and despondency) in the family. I think I shall bring home one of my tame bombs just to introduce it to you.

This morning I had to take the Company out digging about four miles away. The work was of the kind devised simply to provide relaxation for resting infantry. I also had to collect some fuses and things from the R.E. to make up dummy bombs for a silly show we're having to amuse the general. I believe I shall be at home when that comes off.

### *Operations :—*

For some time we have suffered annoyance along our front (also the rear and flanks) from persistent attacks of the enemy. It has become very serious of late, so a powerful counter-attack was arranged, led by Hudson, and supported by dense clouds of asphyxiating bug-killer. The enemy withdrew to their positions in the blanket, leaving nine dead on the field. The blanket was heavily shelled and captured (after a good run). All the enemy were either asphyxiated

or squished. Our gains represent the enemy's lines on the frontage of a shirt and a pair of strongly held pants. There are unfortunately still some guerilla bands, but I'll soon round them up.

\* \* \*

Advanced Trenches,  
August 2nd.

The Railway Transport Officer gave me some papers to give to the Embarkation Officer. I had to report to a General, and he told me my duties—to keep things in order on the boat. I am afraid I got a chair and maintained the position all the way across the channel—so that wasn't too arduous. I found most of the people I knew on the boat, and at Boulogne we had a dinner together and went on by train. We had five hours to wait—4.30 till 10—at a miserable hole, which was rather depressing, but we got in finally about mid-day, and saw the next leave party off. Went to the transport lines, and slept peacefully on Squire's bed till the evening; then we came up here on the padre's cart. They were shelling the roads, of course, and we had one pretty hot one in the town, but the old gee behaved like a gentleman, and here we are. These are good trenches, not far from where we were before. Everything is particularly nice, and I haven't been so fit for ages. O'Morchoe has gone sick, and I'm alone with the old man. He's seedy now, and I'm doing a good deal of work other than my own. Yesterday they started shelling us with *White Hopes*. Mac had come to dinner, but we suspended eating operations to see the fireworks. They put one pretty close . . . and I shouted 'Doand Shood!' We opened an old umbrella



and waved it at them. I went into the dug-out and began eating, but a shell burst near my platoon, and I went to see. While I was there a shell came through the roof of the dug-out and smashed every single article of furniture we had, and all the things on the table. No one was inside, but there was a mix-up. Your last parcel, which I had not yet opened, lay in rags all over the place. The tin of herrings was twisted fantastically, and the contents much in evidence on everything else! A lot of cigarettes some one sent me looked as if they'd been systematically chewed and put back again. A table, half a dozen chairs, and all our mess stock-in-trade, were pulverised. Gott strafe Deutschland! We had the pioneer sergeant to mend the place up, and we've made some more chairs, &c., and now we're happy again.

I've done a lot of wire and odd things outside, and I'm really very cheery. My nerves are better than they ever were.

\*

Bivouac,  
August 4th.

We're in a wood that we've been in twice before, a decent enough place. We had a good quiet time in the trenches, though there were rows going on both sides of us. I had an awful amount of business to do, as all the bombs had to be redistributed and it was all up to me. We got the trenches into very good condition and put up heaps of wire. I only lost one man—but one of my best.

I woke up one morning and found a tabby cat sharing my dug-out. We soon came to an understanding, and she used to mess with us and occupy the whole of one of our best chairs; and no one dared to suggest to her that she shouldn't.

B Coy. had a rotten shelling, and one Saunders was hit, Daly's second in command and a good chap. He's not bad.

I managed to shoot some Huns at long range, and altogether it was not so bad. We were relieved unexpectedly and came back. The company promenaded up and down a famous town,<sup>1</sup> now rather the worse for shells. It's a fearsome place. We got here at dawn, fagged out. We've got some wooden huts, and it's a good place. Done a lot of bomb practice and other peculiar things. Don't know when we go up again, but think it'll be pretty soon.

By the way, I shall get a second star very soon—so says the adjutant.

Sorry I can't write decently, but we're all very busy with company jobs.

\*

August 6th.

It's all bomb practices and revolver shooting, which is a game we can always get. Please send some more ammunition. Laville is getting leave to-day, and so is Hudson. I'm not. I went to see a 15-inch howitzer to-day. She's rather a gem.

\*

August 7th.

We're still here doing very little. I'm bored myself. Went with Daly yesterday into a pretty civilised town we've got here, and had a cheerful tea. We had not left the town two minutes when they began shelling it, so we went on rather quicker. They've been doing a good deal of shelling round here lately, but they do very little harm to anyone. I see they've snaffled Warsaw. That's a rotten show. There's nothing worth telling about the games we play here.

<sup>1</sup> Ypres.

Bivouac,  
August 8th.

They've made me a buck lieutenant, as you may have seen. Everything here is normal and without daily variation, but there's Sir Hiram holding out a halo to me on the horizon, so that's all right. Don't get excited if you hear of a show soon. We aren't likely to be in it.

Perhaps I shall be stimulated to write decent letters, but at present there's nothing to rouse the mind from a pleasant coma.

\*

August 10th.

Here we are again. We're in *the* town in very decent burrows, having come up last night. It was my fate to go and dig as soon as we arrived. We went to the scene of the last show, and the place is beyond description. It's where there's been more business than anywhere else, and looks every bit of it. There were droves of R.A.M.C. people and stretcher-bearers carrying wounded back, and the shell fire was terrific. The Allymans smothered the road and communications with shrapnel all night, and I tell you there have been times when I've been less afraid. I think it's the hottest time I've ever had. To start with: we were waiting in the trench for instructions, and I was between two sappers, who were both killed by a shrapnel. That was a good beginning; and it was all like that, for three hours. I had to take thirty men on to an advanced place, and jumped out of the trench on to the road. We ran right through three shrapnel bursts, and arrived finally at our destination with only one casualty. It was more like an attack than a respectable digging party.

I got buried by a six-inch crump at one stage of the proceedings, and those big fellows combined with shrapnel aren't much fun. However, we won easily. I only lost three men, and we got home all right tho' they shelled us most of the way. My party were working for a long time in the crater, which is a good-sized Chaos by itself, and not too salubrious.

We were incredibly lucky in not getting wiped, but even as it was it might have been more amusing. I'm glad to say everyone was behaving very well, and the stretcher-bearers were splendid.

The only thing I've got against this place is the flies. Please send *any* kind of strafing business you can get.

\*

August 13th.

Herewith shoulder-strap from Hooge crater. Don't tell the policeman. All O.K.

Best love !

D. O. B.



[*Telegram from War Office.*]

August 18.

Regret to inform you that Lieut. D. O. Barnett, Leinster Regt. reported wounded 15th August further particulars will be telegraphed when received. Secretary War Office.

\*

[*Letter from C.O. 2nd Leinster Regt.*]

August 16.

Dear Sir,

It is with the deepest regret that we heard that your son Lieut. Barnett had died this morning of his wound received last night, though I feared the worst when he was brought down from the trenches. May I on behalf of all ranks of this battalion offer to you and to his family the deepest sympathy in your loss? Your son was a very gallant officer, popular with all ranks, who from the very first showed a great aptitude for soldiering. He was always keen on his work, and in him the Battalion has lost a very brave and efficient officer, who will be very hard to replace.

I always liked him from the day he joined, and intended putting him in charge of the Machine guns very soon.

I am, Sir,

Yours sincerely,

G. M. Bullen Smith,

Col. Comdg. 2. Leinster Regt.

\*

[*Telegram from War Office.*]

August 20.

Deeply regret to inform you that Lieut. D. O. Barnett, Leinster Regt. died of wounds 16th August. Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy. Secretary War Office.

\*

[*Telegram from Buckingham Palace.*]

August 21.

The King and Queen deeply regret the loss you and the army have sustained by the death of Lieut. D. O. Barnett in the service of his country. Their Majesties truly sympathise with you in your sorrow. Keeper of the Privy Purse.

[*Extracts from officers' letters.*]

'The officers, N.C.O's and men of the 2nd Leinster Regt., A Coy, tender you their sincere sympathy in the loss of your dear son, Lieut. Barnett. We indeed feel his loss more than words can speak, he being loved by us all. He proved himself in every respect to be a gallant officer, caring little for his own safety, but sought the safety at all times of his men and others. Indeed he leaves a gap that will take some filling.'

'I have been with your son since he joined us and have always had the greatest admiration for him both as a soldier and a man. He was of the sort that don't know fear, and would without doubt have greatly distinguished himself had he been spared; he only wanted the opportunity.

'He was always wonderfully light-hearted and cheerful, so much so that I really believed he enjoyed warfare thoroughly, and, the worse things were, the more cheerful he was. So 'twas no wonder that he endeared himself to us all, and that we all feel his loss as that of a dear brother, and miss him at every turn.

'I was with him just before he died, at the dressing-station, and his uncomplaining courage was an object lesson as to the way a brave man should face his end. He was quite conscious all the time. His face looked beautiful in its calmness, as if chiselled in white marble. I only hope I shall meet my end when it comes with half his nobility.'

'The Division was taken out for the Hooze show on the 9th August, and we were in reserve. The attack was a great

success, and we took over the captured trenches on the 11th, and had a pretty rotten time in them for six days.

'Your brother's company and mine went into the front line for the 14th and 15th; I held the crater, and he the trench on the left of it. 'Twas pretty exciting work, as they shelled us continuously and attacked us with bombs each evening. Your brother was bomb officer and was in his element, leading all the bomb counter attacks successfully, and never getting a scratch. As you know, he can throw extraordinarily well, and he used to frighten the Germans by getting Tonite bombs right into their trenches 150 yards away.

'He spent most of those days with my company, as there was a shortage of food in his part of the line; he was as cheery as ever, though he was firmly convinced that he was going to be killed before he left the place . . . but then we all thought that, for we were losing a good many; and then the atmosphere of it was appalling, with corpses all round both in and out of the trench.

'On the 15th we had a particularly unpleasant afternoon, so bad that the general decided to take us out and give us a rest, and we were to be relieved about 10 p.m.

'At 9 p.m. working parties came up to bury the dead, improve the existing trenches, and dig new ones, and we had to start them working ourselves. Your brother had to start one at a place where our trench touches the German trench with only 20 yards of unoccupied trench in between. He was warned to be careful, as the Germans had a machine gun and several rifles trained on the spot, but with his usual courage he got up on the parapet, and from there directed the working party. A flare showed him up, and he was fired at immediately, and one bullet hit him in the body. He was carried in and bound up at once, and in half an hour was back at the dressing station, where they made him as comfortable as possible, and gave him sufficient morphia to deaden the pain.

‘When I had got my company and my dead and wounded out, I went to the dressing station to see how he was, and found him lying on a stretcher looking very white, but as calm and peaceful as a statue. I bent over him, and he recognised me at once, and said that I could do nothing for him. He knew he was going, for he said ‘It’s all up with me, old chap.’ Of course I told him that was absurd and that we’d kill many Germans between us before that happened ; at which he smiled, for we both knew that his time was near.

‘I stayed with him for half an hour, and then had to go away with my company. He made no complaints and wanted nothing, and he died very shortly afterwards, when they had taken him to the Field Ambulance, a beautiful manly death. I know he got a Christian burial, and that his grave is properly marked and located.

‘His men mourn his loss deeply, for they all, like ourselves, loved him, and please God, we will avenge his death with interest.

‘He was a great pal of mine, and I was always laughing at him for his habit of suddenly bursting into snatches of song, a thing he did at the most unexpected moments ; so that I miss him very much, and sympathise most deeply with you all in your great sorrow.’

\*

[*From the Military Secretary, War Office.*]

M. A. 3. (Cas.)

War Office, Whitehall, S.W.,

6th September, 1915.

The Military Secretary presents his compliments to Mr. P. A. Barnett and begs to inform him that a report has just been received from Army Head-Quarters in the Field which states that the late Lieutenant D. O. Barnett, Leinster Regiment, was buried in the Cemetery at Poperinghe. (Ref. Sheet 28 Belgium. Square G. 8. c. 6. 8.)



[From *The Pauline* of October 1915.]

Lieutenant Denis Oliver Barnett (1907-14), 2nd Leinster Regiment, was wounded in Flanders on August 15th and died next morning. He was captain of the School 1912-4, he played wing three-quarter for the XV for three years, was a good all-round athlete and shot—a good shot indeed with any weapon—and the keenest of field-naturalists and woodmen. He was elected Exhibitioner of Balliol in 1912 and Scholar in 1913. So he was one of our very best. We all knew him; we all admired him; and those who knew him best loved him exceedingly. . . . One who left last Midsummer writes: ‘A Barnett tradition was growing up at School even last year; it ought to be strengthened now, and if the School always follows it his memory will perhaps do greater things even than he did himself for St. Paul’s while he was there.’

One connected with his club writes: ‘We have had many good captains of our club in fifteen years, but none better than Barnett. Fine brains, powerful physique, complete moral and physical courage, unfailing good humour, charming frankness of manner, and absolute straightness—such is the impression he has left. Searching the memories of a lifetime, I can think of no boy who seemed more nearly to approach the pattern of stainless knighthood.’

Another says: ‘Perhaps the most distinctive thing about him was his freshness of mind, which success never spoilt. It is not extravagant to say that he realised the ideal of all that an English Public School stands for. In work and play he won the highest honours that the School has to offer, and he bore them all with a natural modesty of which he was not even conscious.’

One day I wrote her name upon the strand ;  
 But came the waves, and washed it away :  
 Agayne, I wrote it with a second hand ;  
 But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.  
 Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay  
 A mortall thing so to immortalize :  
 For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,  
 And eek my name bee wyped out lykewize.  
 Not so, quod I ; let baser things devize  
 To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame :  
 My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,  
 And in the hevens wryte your glorious name,  
     Where, whenas death shall all the world subdew,  
     Our love shall live, and later life renew.

EDMUND SPENSER.

*For the Balliol Scholarship Examination : December, 1912.*

But when white age and venerable death  
 Bow down the strength and life within their limbs,  
 Drain out the blood and darken their clear eyes,  
 Immortal honour is on them, having past  
 Through splendid life and death desirable  
 To the clear seat and remote throne of souls,  
 Lands indiscoverable in the unheard-of west,  
 Round which the strong stream of a sacred sea  
 Rolls without wind for ever, and the snow  
 There shows not her white wings and windy feet,  
 Nor thunder nor swift rain saith anything,  
 Nor the sun burns, but all things rest and thrive ;  
 And these, filled full of days, divine and dead,  
 Sages and singers fiery from the god,  
 And such as loved their land and all things good  
 And, best beloved of best men, liberty.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

Phyllidis aequoreis inscripsi nomen harenis,  
 unda tamen faciles delet oborta notas.  
 Protinus inscripsi rursus, rursusque resurgens  
 praedatur nostrum mobilis aestus opus.  
 'Nil agis,' illa refert, 'qui sic mortalia mortem  
 tempus in aeternum fallere posse putes.  
 Nempe ego non aliter consumar et ipsa, cadetque  
 ultima non aliter nominis umbra mei.  
 'In cinerem peiora cadant licet,' ipse reclamo:  
 'tu tamen i, volita viva per ora virum.  
 Namque tuae laudis ponet monumenta, tuumque  
 in caelo figet nostra Camena decus.  
 Hic, ubi iam totum Mors atra subegerit orbem,  
 stabit in aeternum, sed renovatus, amor.'

D. O. B.

Ast ubi mors annosa albisque senecta capillis  
 hauserunt vires, ubi vivida pectora tandem  
 frigescent, calidusque fugit de corpore sanguis,  
 obscurique natant oculi, decus illicet illos  
 excipit aeternum, claris virtutibus aevo  
 eximio functos nec non et morte beata.  
 Hinc claras sedes et debita Manibus arva  
 arcanasque procul terras sub sole caduco  
 iam subeunt; illas magnum mare turbinis experts  
 omnis in aeternum dio circumfluit aestu.  
 Non ibi nix rapuit canam trans aethera pinnam  
 ventososque pedes; praeceps silet imber, et atra  
 fulmina, nec nimios sol mittit ab axe calores;  
 undique fausta salus. Huc aevo plena recedit  
 turba, quibus divom mors adspiravit honores,  
 aetherio vates quos igne implevit Apollo,  
 qui patriis studuere suis et honesta secuti  
 omnia, quaeque bonis semper bene cara fuere,  
 libera iura foveant.—

D. O. B.

*Viola.* Ay, but I know,—

*Duke.* What dost thou know?

*Viola.* Too well what love women to men may owe :  
In faith, they are as true of heart as we.  
My father had a daughter loved a man,  
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman,  
I should your lordship.

*Duke.* And what's her history?

*Viola.* A blank, my lord. She never told her love,  
But let concealment, like a worm i' th' bud,  
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought;  
And, with a green and yellow melancholy,  
She sat like Patience on a monument,  
Smiling at grief.

*Twelfth Night, Act II. Sc. 4.*

Of Manners gentle; of Affections mild;  
In Wit, a Man; Simplicity, a Child:  
With native Humour temp'ring virtuous Rage,  
Formed to delight at once and lash the age:  
Above Temptation in a low Estate,  
And uncorrupted ev'n among the Great:  
A safe Companion, and an easy Friend,  
Unblamed through Life, lamented in thy End.  
These are Thy Honours! not that here thy Bust  
Is mixed with Heroes, or with Kings thy Dust;  
But that the Worthy and the Good shall say,  
Striking their pensive bosoms—Here lies Gay.

ALEXANDER POPE.



A. Ἄλλ' οἶδα γὰρ

B. τί δῆτα τοῦτ' ἐρεῖς, τέκνον;

A. τῶν ἀρσένων ὑποῖος, ὑπερίστωρ λέγω,  
ἔρωσ' ἂν ἐκπλήξῃε θήλειαν φύσιν.

ὥς οὐδὲν ἡμῶν πίστεως γ' ἐλλείπεται.

πατρὸς γὰρ ἁμοῦ παρθένος γεγῶσά τις

ἦρα ποτ' ἀνδρός, οἷον ἂν καὶ τὸς σέθεν

ἔρωτ' ἐρᾶν ἔμελλον, εἰ θήλει' ἔφυν.

B. πῶς καὶ διῆγεν;

A. πάντ' ἔχεις ἤδη λόγον·

ἔληθε γὰρ νοσοῦσα, καὶ ῥόδου δίκην

σκωληκοβρώτου τήκεται χροίας γάνος

σῖγα φθινούσῃ· φροντίσιν δ' ἀυαίνεται

λύπης δι' ὠχρᾶς καὶ μελαγχόλου δύης.

χῶς Σφιγγὸς εἰκὼν ἐν τάφοις καθημένης

ἴζει πρὸς αὐτὰς μειδιῶσ' ἀλγίδονας.

D. O. B.

O facilis mores, affectum mitis, Horati,  
ut puero candor mens ita digna viro;

Tu sale nativo condis placabilis iras,  
derisor saeculi deliciaeque tui.

Te nec res tenuis culpas illexit in ullas,  
nec mala corrumpit regis amicitia.

Tu comes unanimus facilisque sodalis; in ipsa  
sanctus eras vita, morte dolendus eras.

Hinc tibi partus honor; non reges inter imago  
stat tua, non regum pulvere mixta tua est.

Sed quantum est hominum—dabit hoc monumenta—  
piorum

‘hic’, mussant, pulso pectore, ‘Flacce, iaces.’

D. O. B.

*For the Balliol Scholarship Examination : December, 1913.*

So Jason, lying in the shadow dark  
 Cast by the stem, the warble of the lark,  
 The chirrup of the cricket, well could hear;  
 And now and then the sound would come anear  
 Of some hind shouting o'er his laden wain.  
 But looking o'er the blue and heaving plain,  
 Sailless it was, and beaten by no oar,  
 And on the yellow edges by the shore  
 The ripple fell in murmur soft and low,  
 As with wide sweeping wings the gulls did go  
 About the breakers crying plaintively.

But Jason, looking out across the sea,  
 Beheld the signs of wind a-drawing nigh,  
 Gathering about the clear cold eastern sky;  
 And many an evening then he thought upon  
 Ere yet the quays of Aea they had won,  
 And longings that had long been gathering  
 Stirred in his heart, and now he felt the sting  
 Of life within him, and at last he said :—  
 'Why should I move about as move the dead,  
 And take no heed of what all men desire?  
 Once more I feel within my heart the fire  
 That drave me forth unto the white-walled town,  
 Leaving the sunny slopes and thick-leaved crown  
 Of grey old Pelion, that alone I knew,  
 Great deeds and wild, and desperate things to do.'

WILLIAM MORRIS.

Ergo heros, fagi gelida prostratus in umbra,  
 dulcisonam liquida corydallida voce querentem  
 lentus, et argutae strepitum bibit aure cicadae.  
 Iam longe clamor placidas adlabitur aures  
 ducentis tauros onerataque plaustra bubulci.  
 Ast ubi caeruleum marmor fluctusque coruscos  
 prospexit, nullo late stare aequora velo  
 nec remis temerata videt, flavamque per oram  
 cum leni crepitans tenuis cadit unda susurro,  
 et mergi latis hinc atque hinc litora pennis  
 pervolitant maestique suis loca questibus implent.

Ecce autem, fluctus oculis dum lustrat Iason,  
 conspexit ventos prodentia signa futuros  
 ingruere Eoi per templa nitentia caeli.  
 Plurima tum reputat vergente crepuscula Phoebos,  
 cum nondum Aeacis portum tetigisset in oris.  
 Tum vetus exarsit flamma maiore cupido,  
 impensaque animum tentat face, perque medullas  
 vividus ardor iit; tandem sic ore profatur:—

En ego cur vanus, ceu luce carentis imago  
 imbecilla, ferar, spretis, quae praemia vitae  
 gens hominum sequitur? Multa a! vestigia priscae  
 agnosco flammae, qua candida motus ad urbis  
 moenia descendi, iuga montis aprica reliqui,  
 et glaucum annoso tollens in vertice silvas  
 Pelion, et soli loca quae mihi nota fuere,  
 ut diros casus, ut fortia facta laboresque  
 audax aggrededer.

D. O. B.

*For the Thruston Latin Verse Prize: 1912*

'And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
 There came a noise of revellers: the rills  
 Into the wide stream came of purple hue—  
     'Twas Bacchus and his crew!  
 The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills  
 From kissing cymbals made a merry din—  
     'Twas Bacchus and his kin!  
 Like to a moving vintage down they came,  
 Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;  
 All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,  
     To scare thee, Melancholy!  
 O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!  
 And I forgot thee, as the berried holly  
 By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,  
 Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon:—  
     I rush'd into the folly!

'Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,  
 Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,  
     With sidelong laughing;  
 And little rills of crimson wine imbrued  
 His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white  
     For Venus' pearly bite;  
 And near him rode Silenus on his ass,  
 Pelted with flowers as he on did pass  
     Tipsily quaffing.

'Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye!  
 So many, and so many, and such glee?  
 Why have ye left your bowers desolate,  
     Your lutes, and gentler fate?—  
 "We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,  
     A conquering!  
 Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,  
 We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide:—  
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
     To our wild minstrelsy!"



‘Et iam sic positae, glauci super ardua clivi  
 murmura lascivae levis attulit aura catervae.  
 Purpureos latices altum dat rivus in amnem;  
 Bacchus adest, mediumque chori se candidus infert.  
 Cornua iam cecinere; tonant argentea laeto  
 cymbala pulsa sono, labro libantia labrum.  
 Ipse venis thiaso, Liber, comitate tuorum.  
 Olli proveniunt; fieri vinalia credas,  
 dum nova ducatur festo vindemia plausu.  
 Fronde caput cinctum; rubor igneus ora notabat;  
 ducebant hilares lymphata mente choreas,  
 excussisse nigram si possent pectore Curam.  
 Me quoque Cura fugit—prima mihi, Cura, iuventa  
 nil nisi nomen eras—; sic praeterit arbuta pastor,  
 triste decus brumae, virides ubi protulit aestas  
 aurea delicias, patulaeque umbracula fagi  
 dulcia consociant. Nec fit mora, protinus ardens  
 me dare lascivis propero furibunda choreis.

‘In mediis curru exultans formosus Iacchus  
 frondentem vacuo tractabat pollice thyrsum  
 et caput obliquis flectens ridebat ocellis;  
 purpureum tinguit nivis aemula brachia vinum,  
 perque humeros manat teretes, qui ad basia divam  
 dulcia Acidaliæ niveo candore vocarent.  
 Nec procul ipse senex vehitur Silenus asello;  
 illum flore cohors multo lasciva petebat,  
 ebria vinosis ducentem pocula labris.

‘Protinus invasi: Laetae memorate puellae,  
 quae tanta ante oculos variae miscetur imago  
 laetitiae? unde domo? cur visum umbracula, Musam,  
 delicias blandae molles deponere vitae?

“Bacchi in verba ducis juravimus; auspice Baccho  
 pergitur. En volitat per rura virentia victor!  
 Quo res cunque cadant, laetis per lata choreis  
 currere regna iuvat, gressuque haerere Lyæi.  
 Tu nostri te scribe gregis, pulcherrima virgo,  
 festaque silvestri celebra comes orgia Musa.”

‘Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye!  
So many, and so many, and such glee?

Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left  
Your nuts in oak-tree cleft?—

“For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;  
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,  
And cold mushrooms;

For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;  
Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth!  
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
To our mad minstrelsy!”

‘Over wide streams and mountains great we went,  
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,  
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,

With Asian elephants:

Onward these myriads—with song and dance,  
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians’ prance,  
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,  
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,  
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil  
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers’ toil:  
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,  
Nor care for wind and tide.

‘Mounted on panthers’ furs and lions’ manes,  
From rear to van they scour about the plains;  
A three days’ journey in a moment done:  
And always, at the rising of the sun,  
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,  
On spleenful unicorn.

‘I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown  
Before the vine-wreath crown!  
I saw parch’d Abyssinia rouse and sing  
To the silver cymbals’ ring!  
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce  
Old Tartary the fierce!

‘Vosque, hilares Satyri, unde domo? Quo gaudia tanta?’

Quo tanti coetus? Quianam plact avia lustra  
secretumque nemus gratasque relinquere messes  
condita rimosa compositaque corna cupressu?—

“Purpureos colles, compostos arbore fructus,  
rore satos gelido fungos flavamque genistam  
linquere nos vini pepulit, vini illa cupido;  
vinum per terras comites nos egit Iacchi.  
Effusi risus calicisque incedit anheli  
maximus ipse deus. Nostrae te iunge cohorti,  
festaque Lenaeo celebra simul orgia cantu.”

‘Saxa per et montes et latos curritur amnes,  
nec mora, ni quando servans hederosa Lyaeus  
tectata toris recubat, prorsus contendit anhels  
vivida pantherae tigris coniuncta iugali,  
Indiacusque elephas. Choreis et carmine pergunt  
innumeri. Hic onager, nitidaque hic pelle renidens  
Thracius exultat sonipes; hic ordine segni  
remipedum longe crocodilorum agmina repunt.  
Et nitida in tergis infantum turba iocatur,  
remigium et duos nautarum imitata labores,  
in speciem navis; iam serica carbasa pandunt  
mentitosque agitant remos, nec cura furorem  
extimuisse maris nec flabra minacia venti.

‘Pars alta in pardis, pars in cervice leonum  
villosa vehitur, longoque per aequora currunt  
agmine. Perveniunt vix missi carcere calcem,  
et tridui fecere viam. Sed cornua prima  
corripiunt luce et lato venabula ferro;  
in nemus ire parant venatum et lustra ferarum  
omnis obibat turba ferocibus alta chimaeris.

‘Vidi et Osireas duplicato poplite gentes  
vitiferam victas late coluisse coronam.  
Vidi Maurorum ferventia tollere vocem  
litora, et argutum modulari ad cymbala cantum.  
Traicit extremos Seras Nomadasque feroces  
fervida praecipiti victrix vindemia fluctu.

The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail,  
 And from their treasures scatter pearly hail;  
 Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,  
     And all his priesthood moans;  
 Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.—  
 Into these regions came I following him,  
 Sick hearted, weary—so I took a whim  
 To stray away into these forests drear  
     Alone, without a peer:  
 And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.'

JOHN KEATS.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
 From fields where glory does not stay,  
 And early though the laurel grows  
 It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut  
 Cannot see the record cut,  
 And silence sounds no worse than cheers  
 After earth has stopped the ears.

Now you will not swell the rout  
 Of lads that wore their honours out,  
 Runners whom renown outran  
 And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,  
 The fleet foot on the sill of shade,  
 And hold to the low lintel up  
 The still defended challenge-cup.

A. E. Housman.



Indorum reges multa radiantia gemma  
 sceptrâ simul ponunt, et plena ludicra ponti  
 alba manu spargunt penetralibus e thesauris.  
 Sedibus arcanis Belus gemit; altaque Beli  
 plurimus ingeminat questus per fana sacerdos;  
 ora tremunt uno Bacchi pallentia nutu.  
 Huc equidem Bacchi perveni gressibus haerens.  
 Saucia nunc curis, longarum lassa viarum,  
 elabi subita correpta libidine pergo,  
 et desolatam, nemus illaetabile lustrans,  
 ire redire viam. Fata inviolata deorum  
 dicere plura vetant. Sed tu ne quaere doceri.'

D. O. B.

Tu non laevus eras, qui tam cito, Nise, dedisti  
 hinc, ubi non ulli gloria certa, locum.  
 Ocior in virides laurus se pandit honores,  
 sed cadit aestivis ocior illa rosis.  
 Non cernunt oculi, quis nox insedit, ut alter  
 vicerit invictos mobilitate pedes.  
 Non illi plausu minus ipsa silentia cordi,  
 cui placidas aures mors hebetarit, erunt.  
 Non eris illorum quis iam florente iuventa  
 consenuit lento gloria victa situ.  
 Nec tu talis eris quem laus pede vicerit, aut qui  
 vivendo laudem viceris ipse tuam.  
 Quare siste, precor, reboat dum plausibus aether;  
 Pernicemque refer quo vocat umbra pedem.  
 Laurea tum nullo sordentia praemia casu  
 ante fores superis tolle dicanda deis.

D. O. B.

*To die young is to do that soon, and in some fewer Days, which once thou must do ; it is but the giving over of a Game, that after never so many Hazards must be lost.*

*Days are not to be esteemed after the Number of them, but after the Goodness. More Compass maketh not a Sphere more compleat, but as round is a little as a large Ring.*

*The Violets have their Time, though they impurple not the Winter, and the Roses keep their Season, though they disclose not their Beauty in the Spring.*















